

TEACHING THAT MAKES SENSE

# Learning Across the Curriculum

*Powerful Tools for Success in all Subjects*

by  
Steve Peha

The logo for Teaching That Makes Sense (ttms) features a stylized lightbulb icon to the left of the lowercase letters 'ttms'. Below this, the words 'teaching that makes sense' are written in a sans-serif font, followed by the website address 'www.ttms.org'.

teaching that makes sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)



© 1995-2010 by Teaching That Makes Sense, Inc. Some rights reserved.

# Please Use This Stuff

*Just follow the rules. Thanks!*

1. YOU MAY use this Work or any portion thereof for non-commercial purposes only. No individual or entity shall profit from this Work but for the intellectual benefit that may accrue by its conscientious application. No fee may be charged in connection with the use or dissemination of this Work; nor may any fee be charged to any participant in any event where this Work is used or disseminated, whether such event is conducted in person or via electronic means; nor may any fee be charged, including tuition, to any person where this Work is used or disseminated by any institution, representative, or affiliate thereof. To request a commercial use license, click here to contact us at [info@ttms.org](mailto:info@ttms.org).

2. YOU MAY copy and distribute this Work, or any portion thereof, by any non-electronic means, as long as this Work is not altered in any way other than coloring, reduction, enlargement, or binding.

3. YOU MAY incorporate this entire Work or its contents into any other work. Any work containing this Work or its contents shall be bound by the same rights as this Work, shall be considered a derivative work based on this Work, shall include the text of this agreement in paragraphs 1-5 and the URL of this Work, and shall bear the following notice: © Copyright 1995-2010 by Teaching That Makes Sense, Inc. Used by permission. For more information, contact us at [info@ttms.org](mailto:info@ttms.org).

4. YOU MAY NOT distribute this Work electronically or post it for electronic distribution or download. You may, however, send or post a link to this Work using its URL in the *Teaching That Makes Sense Free Learning Project Library* below:

<https://ttms.box.net/shared/static/f4idbkhb8c.pdf>

5. The rights enumerated above extend only to material to which *Teaching That Makes Sense, Inc.* holds applicable permissions.



*“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”*

# What is TTMS?

## *A Brief Explanation of Teaching That Makes Sense*

*Teaching That Makes Sense*® works with people who are passionate about learning. We provide the following services:

- Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Training Workshops
- Summer Professional Development Institutes
- In-Classroom Model Teaching, Co-Teaching, Observation, and Planning
- Curriculum Design and Program Evaluation
- Instructional and Administrative Coaching
- Educational Leadership Training and School Improvement Strategy

We work at all grade levels, K-12, and across the curriculum, in all kinds of schools. We specialize in the implementation of research-based practices that can be scaled easily from a single classroom to an entire district.

Since 1995, we have worked with over 20,000 people in over 500 schools and other learning organizations throughout the United States and Canada.

We provide support to teachers and learners using the most sensible methods and materials available. Our goal is to increase academic achievement by making teaching easier for teachers and learning more meaningful for kids.

You can learn more about *Teaching That Makes Sense* by visiting our website at [www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org).



*“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”*

TEACHING THAT MAKES SENSE

# Featured Downloads

*The Best of Teaching That Makes Sense*

*To view our entire library of free teaching materials click [here](#).*



*“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”*

# Featured Workshops

## *The Best of Teaching That Makes Sense*



### **Writing Strategies For Every Classroom.**

In this highly interactive workshop, you'll be introduced to an innovative set of writing strategies that will help your students make dramatic improvements almost instantly.



### **Helping Writers Master Mechanics.**

Got problems with punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure? Kids don't like to edit? Get proven tools based on what writing conventions really are and how real writers really learn them.



### **Read Non-Fiction Now!**

Non-fiction texts make up most of the reading we pursue in our daily lives but fiction dominates in school. Give your students the skills they need to succeed across the curriculum and out in the world.



### **Comprehensive Comprehension.**

Explore techniques that dramatically improve reading comprehension without traditional tests, tedious questions, dreary worksheets, and other inauthentic unmotivating methods.



### **Mastering Basic Math Facts.**

How is it that so many kids sneak into 5th or 6th grade without mastering their basic math facts? With a set of innovative activities, kids can master basic facts quicker than you ever thought possible.



### **Math Problem-Solving Power.**

Serious math involves serious math problem-solving. And that means students need serious problem-solving strategies. Teach math the way mathematicians teach it and give kids an edge.



### **Grading That Works For Everyone.**

Stop spending hours grading papers. Use a research-based approach to grading that's fair, fast, accurate, highly motivating for kids, and—this is the best part—much easier for you.



### **Assessment That Makes Sense.**

Learn how to use the key principles of effective assessment to gather information that guides instruction in less time and with fewer interruptions in your everyday teaching.

*To schedule a workshop for your school or district click [here](#).*

*“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”*

# **Learning Across the Curriculum**

Reading, Writing, and Thinking Skill  
Strategies for Student Success



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)

# Notes

# Table of Contents

Introduction • 5

The Transition-Action-Details Strategy • 9

The Idea-Details Strategy • 23

Additional Detail Strategies • 35

The What-Why-How Strategy • 43

The Content-Purpose-Audience Strategy • 51

The Six Principles of Research • 59

What is Good Writing? • 69

What is Good Reading? • 102

Comprehensive Comprehension • 120

Close Reading • 130

Writing Strategy Reference • 140

Reading Strategy Reference • 154

Content Area Strategy Reference • 168



# Notes

# Introduction



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)

# Survey

*What are the most common problems  
your students have with reading and writing  
across the curriculum?*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

# Workshop Themes

Big ideas that will guide us  
in our work together

1

**Success across the curriculum takes teamwork across the curriculum.** Almost every learner struggles with at least one subject. And for many, it's more than one. Assuring student success across the curriculum requires an extraordinary commitment to teamwork and innovation. It's not just about good practice, it's about sharing good practice in every classroom.

2

**Language Arts leads the way.** When it comes to reading and writing, Language Arts must provide the foundation that gives kids their start and the cross-curricular literacy strategies that propel them to success in other subjects. Content area teachers are not reading and writing teachers but they can be implementers of effective reading and writing strategies.

3

**I do it. We do it. You do it.** Strategies must be taught repeatedly and by a variety of means. Modeling ("I do it") comes first. Teachers must model what they expect students to master. Shared work ("We do it") comes next. Students must apply strategies together with their teacher leading the way. Only then will students have what they need to succeed at individual work ("You do it").

4

**Read. Write. Think. Talk. Etc.** In order for kids to have the best chance of learning new information, they have to process it in as many authentic and meaningful ways as possible. They can't just read about something or listen to it. They have to engage with it in ways that help them create something new and make the learning their own.

5

**The Three R's of Memorization.** Much of content area learning requires memorization. In order to help kids memorize, we must help them: (1) *Reduce* the amount of information they need to learn; (2) *Reorganize* that information into a form that is efficient to study; and (3) *Regenerate* the knowledge we want them to retain using the reduced and reorganized information.

6

**Fewer better strategies used consistently works best.** There's certainly no shortage of strategies these days. But maybe that's the problem. Maybe we teach so many different things to kids that they never get very good at any one of them. Maybe the trick is to find a small number of highly effective strategies and use these for the majority of our work.

## Notes

# **The Transition-Action-Details Strategy**

An All-Purpose Tool  
for Sequential Information



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)

# Sequential Information

The curriculum is dominated  
by things that go in order

*Where does sequential information  
enter into what you teach  
and the things you ask your students to do?*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**HINT:** Sequencing a narrative, summarizing the plot of a novel; recalling historic events; reading and writing biographies; describing a math algorithm; writing a lab report; describing a scientific process; writing and following directions; describing the steps to solve a problem, etc.

# Transition-Action-Details

The pattern of sequential information

## Plot Summary of a Novel

After years of misery and suffering at the hands of his selfish relatives, Harry receives an invitation to attend an unusual school. His time at Hogwarts, a school for wizards, changes his life forever.

Transition	Action	Details
After years of misery and suffering at the hands of his selfish relatives,	Harry receives an invitation to attend an unusual school.	His time at Hogwarts, a school for wizards, changes his life forever.

## Description of a Scientific Process

During the light-independent reaction, NADPH provides the hydrogen atoms that help form glucose. ATP provides the energy for this and other reactions used to synthesize glucose.

SOURCE: WIKIPEDIA

Transition	Action	Details
During the light-independent reaction,	NADPH provides the hydrogen atoms that help form glucose.	ATP provides the energy for this and other reactions used to synthesize glucose.



# Transition-Action-Details

The pattern of sequential information

## Recollection of an Historic Event

In April of 1974, the House Judiciary Committee subpoenaed the tapes of 42 White House conversations. The conversations revealed an overwhelming concern with punishing political opponents and thwarting the Watergate investigation.

SOURCE: ENCARTA

Transition	Action	Details
In April of 1974,	the House Judiciary Committee subpoenaed the tapes of 42 White House conversations.	The conversations revealed an overwhelming concern with punishing political opponents and thwarting the Watergate investigation.

## Driving Directions

About half a mile down North Greensboro Street, you'll come to Bolin Forest Drive. Take a right just in front of the large wooden sign. If you see Robert Hunt Drive, you've gone too far.

Transition	Action	Details
About half a mile down North Greensboro Street,	you'll come to Bolin Forest Drive.	Take a right just in front of the large wooden sign. If you see Robert Hunt Drive, you've gone too far.

# Transition-Action-Details

The pattern of sequential information

## Pre-Writing a Narrative Essay

Transition	Action	Details
Last summer,	I went on vacation with my family to the ocean.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We go almost every year.</li><li>• There's a lot to do.</li><li>• I get to do a lot of exploring with my dog.</li></ul>
On the third day,	I was walking with my dog along a cliff overlooking the beach below.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We were about 75 feet up from the beach.</li><li>• We were on a path with trees and brush and big piles of rocks by the edge.</li></ul>
As we got up to the highest point on the cliff,	We saw a small animal scurry under some rocks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It startled me at first but then I realized it was probably more afraid of us than we were of it.</li><li>• I just kept on walking.</li></ul>
All of a sudden,	My dog ran after the animal and jumped over the rocks to try to get it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• He likes to chase things.</li><li>• I was amazed how fast he ran.</li><li>• He got close to the rocks but didn't stop. He went right over.</li></ul>
[ No Transition ]	I ran after him, looked over the edge of the cliff, and found him clinging to some brush hanging by his paws.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I was so scared.</li><li>• I thought he'd gone over the cliff and fallen all the way down.</li><li>• He looked scared, too.</li></ul>
At first I didn't know what to do. Then,	I tried to reach over the rocks to pull him up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I grabbed a piece of the branch and pulled him up with it.</li><li>• I just kept telling him to hold on and not move.</li><li>• I could tell that he was just as scared as I was.</li></ul>

# Writing with TAD

## Sketching sequential stories

Transition	Action	Details
	<b>1</b> <i>Fill in the first "Action" box</i>	
<b>5</b> <i>Fill in transitions. (Optional)</i>	<b>3</b> <i>Fill in the middle of the story</i>	<b>4</b> <i>Fill in the details. (At least 1 per box)</i>
	<b>2</b> <i>Fill in the last "Action" box</i>	

# Reading with TAD

## Reducing and restructuring sequential information

### **The Birth of Professional Baseball**

By the 1850s landowners were regularly maintaining baseball parks to rent to baseball clubs. Baseball teams customarily collected donations from fans to cover costs. The first fully enclosed baseball park, the Union Grounds in Brooklyn, was completed in 1862. This style of park soon became popular because owners could sell food and drink to spectators without competition from street vendors.

The National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP), an organization formed in 1858, prohibited members from taking payment for playing baseball. During the early 1860s ballpark owners earned large profits while the amateur ball players provided free entertainment. Pressure from players eventually forced the NABBP to change its policy in 1868 and allow players to accept money. This ruling marked the birth of professional baseball.

The first professional baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, began play in 1869. They traveled the country that year, playing before thousands of fans and winning 60 games without a loss. Soon baseball's promoters began forming professional baseball clubs in cities across the Northeastern and Midwestern United States. By 1870 professional players outnumbered amateurs in the NABBP and the remaining amateurs withdrew. In 1871 the organization became the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players.

SOURCE: ENCARTA

# Reading with TAD

## Reducing and restructuring sequential information

### Paragraph 1

By the 1850s landowners were regularly maintaining baseball parks to rent to baseball clubs. Baseball teams customarily collected donations from fans to cover costs. The first fully enclosed baseball park, the Union Grounds in Brooklyn, was completed in 1862. This style of park soon became popular because owners could sell food and drink to spectators without competition from street vendors.

Transition	Action	Details
By the 1850s	Landowners rented parks to baseball teams.	Teams took donations to cover costs.
In 1862	Union Grounds in Brooklyn was first enclosed park.	Closed park allowed owners to sell food and drink to fans without competition from street vendors.

### Paragraph 2

The National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP), an organization formed in 1858, prohibited members from taking payment for playing baseball. During the early 1860s ballpark owners earned large profits while the amateur ball players provided free entertainment. Pressure from players eventually forced the NABBP to change its policy in 1868 and allow players to accept money. This ruling marked the birth of professional baseball.

Transition	Action	Details
In 1858	NABBP formed.	Members could not take money for playing.
During the 1860s	Park owners made large profits.	Players worked for free.
In 1868	NABBP allowed players to accept money.	Birth of professional baseball.

# Reading with TAD

## Reducing and restructuring sequential information

### Paragraph 3

The first professional baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, began play in 1869. They traveled the country that year, playing before thousands of fans and winning 60 games without a loss. Soon baseball's promoters began forming professional baseball clubs in cities across the Northeastern and Midwestern United States. By 1870 professional players outnumbered amateurs in the NABBP and the remaining amateurs withdrew. In 1871 the organization became the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players.

Transition	Action	Details
In 1869	Cincinnati red stockings were first pro baseball team.	Traveled the country; 60-0 record.
Soon	Promoters began forming professional teams in Northeast and Midwest.	
By 1870	More professional players than amateurs.	Amateurs withdrew from NABBP.
In 1871	NABBP became the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players.	

*How does the TAD strategy help you learn the material?*

# Reading with TAD

## You try it!

### **JFK: Hero of PT-109**

Kennedy hoped to fight in the war but in the spring of 1941 he was rejected by the U.S. Army because of the back injury he had received at Harvard. Determined to see active service, he passed the U.S. Navy physical examination after a five-month program of special exercise.

Early in 1943 Kennedy became commander of PT Boat 109 in the South Pacific. In August 1943 the boat was rammed by a Japanese destroyer in waters off New Georgia in the Solomon Islands. The boat was sliced in half and 2 of the 13 men aboard were killed. Kennedy and the other survivors clung for hours to the wreckage, hoping for rescue. When none came, they swam to a small island 5 km (3 mi) away. Kennedy towed a wounded crew member by clenching the long strap of the injured man's life jacket between his teeth.

For the next four days, Kennedy swam along a water route that he knew American ships used. He finally encountered friendly natives on Cross Island. They brought his message for help, carved on a coconut shell, to U.S. infantry patrol and Kennedy and his crew were finally rescued. For his "courage, endurance, and excellent leadership,"

Kennedy received the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Medal, awarded for heroism not involving conflict with the enemy. Then, because of an attack of malaria and the recurrence of his back disorder, Kennedy returned to the United States for medical treatment.

SOURCE: ENCARTA

# TAD in World History

## Understanding the origins of the Middle East crisis

Transition	Action	Details
When the Turkish Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end of World War I,	Great Britain ended up administering Palestine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• League of Nations' Mandate System.</li><li>• League Covenant Article 22.</li></ul>
In 1917, at the urging of Zionist groups in England,	The British issued the Balfour Declaration.	The declaration expressed support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."
During the years of the Mandate, 1922-1947,	Many Jews immigrated to Palestine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mostly from Eastern Europe.</li><li>• Fleeing Nazi persecution in the 1930s.</li></ul>
In 1947,	The UN proposed splitting Palestine into two states.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One state for Palestinian Arabs, the other for Jews.</li><li>• Jerusalem would be internationalized.</li><li>• Resolution 181 of 1947.</li></ul>
In 1948,	Israel declared its independence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Israel attacked by Arab nations.</li><li>• They won the war ; claimed 75% of the land in Palestine.</li><li>• Half the population of Palestinians left or were thrown out.</li></ul>
In 1967, as a result of the Six Day War,	Israel came to occupy the remaining territory of Palestine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The West Bank was formerly under Jordanian control.</li><li>• The Gaza Strip was controlled by Egypt.</li></ul>



# TAD and the History of Science

## The discovery of photosynthesis

Transition	Action	Details
In the 1770s,	Joseph Priestley, in England, performed experiments showing that plants release a type of air that allows combustion.	He burned a candle in a closed jar until the flame went out. He put a leaf in the jar and after several days showed that the candle could burn again.
Although Priestley did not know all the implications of his discovery,	His work showed that plants release oxygen into the atmosphere.	Even today, scientists are still investigating the mechanisms by which plants produce oxygen.
Building on Priestley's work,	A Dutch doctor named Jan Ingenhousz proved that sunlight was necessary for photosynthesis and that only the green parts of plants could release oxygen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the same time, Jean Senebier, in Switzerland, discovered that <math>\text{CO}_2</math> is required.</li> <li>• Nicolas-Théodore de Saussure, a Swiss chemist, showed that water is required.</li> </ul>
In 1845,	Julius Robert von Mayer, a German physician, proposed that photosynthetic organisms convert light energy into chemical free energy.	This was a final piece of the puzzle that led to the modern understanding of photosynthesis.
By the middle of the nineteenth century,	The key feature of photosynthesis was understood: that plants use light energy to make carbohydrates from $\text{CO}_2$ and water.	Because glucose, a six carbon sugar, is often an intermediate product of photosynthesis, the equation of photosynthesis is frequently written as: $6\text{CO}_2 + 12\text{H}_2\text{O} + \text{Light Energy} \rightarrow \text{C}_6\text{H}_{12}\text{O}_6 + 6\text{O}_2 + 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$

# TAD and a Scientific Process

## Chemical reactions in the visual system

Transition	Action	Details
When light enters the eye,	It hits the cornea first.	It passes through the cornea, then the aqueous humor, the lens, and the vitreous humor.
Eventually,	The light reaches the retina, the light-sensing part of the eye.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The retina has rods and cones.</li><li>• Rods handle vision in low light.</li><li>• Cones handle color vision and detail.</li></ul>
When light contacts these two types of cells,	A series of complex chemical reactions occurs.	A chemical called Rhodopsin creates electrical impulses in the optic nerve.
When it is exposed to light,	Rhodopsin decomposes.	Light causes a physical change in part of the chemical.
In an extremely fast reaction, beginning in a few trillionths of a second,	Rhodopsin breaks down and eventually forms Metarhodopsin.	This chemical causes electrical impulses that are transmitted to the brain and interpreted as light.

# TAD and Math Story Problems

## Step-by-step solutions

### Orange Juice Birthday

On a sweltering Saturday in August, Mr. Cal Q. Luss trudged into his local Friendly Mart to get orange juice for his son's birthday party. For last year's party he had purchased three gallons, more than enough, or so he thought, to slake the monster thirsts of his son's 23 classmates. But Eddie Guzzle drank almost an entire gallon by himself, and poor Elaine Dryer fainted from dehydration after Pin the Tail on the Donkey.

As he entered the store, a blast of air-conditioned coolness reminded him of the temperature outside. It was a scorcher: you could fry eggs on the sidewalk and still have heat left over for a side a bacon and a couple of flapjacks. Mr. Luss vowed that this year he wouldn't be calling little Lainie's mom to pick her daughter up at the Emergency Room. Better make it four gallons.

Proceeding quickly to the juice section, Mr. Luss found himself at a loss when he discovered that all of the large carton juice containers were sold out. He would have to purchase 12-ounce cans of juice instead, but he couldn't figure out how many to get. Extremely frustrated, and behind on time, he knocked the entire display of juice cans into his shopping cart and dashed briskly to the checkout. When he got home, he discovered he had purchased 42 cans of juice. Did he get the four gallons he needed, or will two dozen 9-year olds be fainting in the fierce mid-day summer sun?

Transition	Action	Details
First,	Figure out how many ounces there are in a gallon.	1 Gallon = 128 ounces
Next,	Multiply by 4 to get the amount of juice he needed to get.	$4 \times 128 =$ $4 \times 100 = 400 +$ $4 \times 20 = 80 +$ $4 \times 8 = 32$ $400 + 80 + 32 = 512 \text{ ounces}$
Then,	Figure out how much juice he bought by multiplying the number of cans times 12 ounces.	$42 \times 12 =$ $42 \times 10 = 420$ $42 \times 2 = 84$ $420 + 84 = 504 \text{ ounces}$
Finally,	Subtract the amount he bought from the amount he needed.	$512 - 504 = 8$ He was 8 ounces short.

# **The Idea-Details Strategy**

A Powerful Tool  
For All Kinds of Texts



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)

# Idea-Details

A generic strategy for organizing information

*All structured communication  
can be analyzed as sets of ideas and details.*

## Three Arrangements of Ideas and Details

Idea First	Idea Last	Idea Implied
THIS IS THE IDEA This is a detail. This is a detail. This is a detail. Etc.	This is a detail. This is a detail. This is a detail. Etc. THIS IS THE IDEA	(THE IDEA ISN'T STATED) This is a detail. This is a detail. This is a detail. Etc..

## Writer's Strike Ends

The Writers Guild of America voted overwhelmingly to end its 100-day strike against Hollywood producers. The guild did not vote on the contract negotiated over the weekend, but the lopsided vote suggests that it will be approved. (AP in BusinessWeek.com) Los Angeles Development Corp. economist Jack Kyser said the total cost of the strike to L.A. will top \$3 billion. Meanwhile, some experts said the writers' gains could be short-lived, as studios use the strike as an excuse to cut budgets and shows.

SOURCE: THE WEEK

Idea	Details
The Writers Guild voted to end it's strike.  (IDEA FIRST)	New contract expected to be approved soon.  Cost of strike to exceed \$3 billion.  Writers' gains may be undercut as studios cut budgets and shows.

# Idea-Details

A generic strategy for organizing information

## Super Tuesday Results

Voters in more than 20 American states went to the polls on Super Tuesday to choose their presidential favorites. On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton chalked up solid wins in big states such as California, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York. Barack Obama, her rival, won more states overall and did well in the South. With most of the Democratic delegates shared out proportionally, the party's nominating process seemed to be far from over.

SOURCE: THE WEEK

Idea	Details
After Super Tuesday, the Democratic race is still close.  (IDEA LAST)	People in 20 states voted on Super Tuesday.  Clinton won big states like CA, MA, NJ, and NY  Obama won more states and did well in the South

## Britney Spears Hospitalized

Britney Spears has been committed to two weeks in a psychiatric ward. Spears was taken to the psychiatric unit of UCLA Medical Center last week on the recommendation of her psychiatrist, and is being held under a California law that allows involuntary hospitalization if a patient poses a danger to herself or others. Spears' hospitalization comes after months of increasingly erratic behavior and reports of drug and alcohol abuse, which led a court to bar her from seeing her two young sons.

SOURCE: THE WEEK

Idea	Details
<i>Britney Spears has serious mental health problems.</i>  (IDEA IMPLIED)	She has to spend two weeks in the psych unit at UCLA med center.  Law allows her to be hospitalized if she's a danger to herself or others.  Months of erratic behavior and reported drug and alcohol abuse.  She can't see her children.

# Reading with Idea-Details

Reducing and restructuring generic information

Kalamazoo, a medium-sized post-industrial city in Michigan, shares the problems of countless such others across America. Its population is shrinking and its poverty rate hovers around 30%. But in November 2005 it received good news: in an effort to revitalize the city, anonymous donors would pay the college tuition fees of every graduate from Kalamazoo's public schools.

The so-called "Kalamazoo Promise" made national headlines, a change for a city used to insisting that its name isn't a joke. Some 80 towns and districts have contacted Kalamazoo to learn about the promise—and a few have even copied it.

The program's central premise is that investing in human capital helps to ensure a town's economic future. The offer of free education, Kalamazoo enthusiasts hope, will retain middle-class residents and attract new ones, tighten the housing market and help the city to lure businesses that are keen to take advantage of a new skilled workforce. This attention to the labor supply, says Tim Bartik, an economist at Kalamazoo's Upjohn Institute, is a markedly different approach from the more usual one of tax incentives.

SOURCE: THE ECONOMIST

# Reading with Idea-Details

Reducing and restructuring generic information

## Paragraph 1

Kalamazoo, a medium-sized post-industrial city in Michigan, shares the problems of countless such others across America. Its population is shrinking and its poverty rate hovers around 30%. But in November 2005 it received good news: in an effort to revitalize the city, anonymous donors would pay the college tuition fees of every graduate from Kalamazoo's public schools.

Idea	Details
Anonymous donors agree to pay college tuition for every kid who graduates from public school.	Kalamazoo has shrinking population and 30% poverty rate.  Program is an attempt to revitalize the city.

## Paragraph 2

The so-called "Kalamazoo Promise" made national headlines, a change for a city used to insisting that its name isn't a joke. Some 80 towns and districts have contacted Kalamazoo to learn about the promise—and a few have even copied it.

Idea	Details
Program called "Kalamazoo Promise" made national headlines.	80 towns have contacted Kalamazoo to learn about it.  A few have copied it.



# Reading with Idea-Details

Reducing and restructuring generic information

## Paragraph 3

The program's central premise is that investing in human capital helps to ensure a town's economic future. The offer of free education, Kalamazoo enthusiasts hope, will retain middle-class residents and attract new ones, tighten the housing market and help the city to lure businesses that are keen to take advantage of a new skilled workforce. This attention to the labor supply, says Tim Bartik, an economist at Kalamazoo's Upjohn Institute, is a markedly different approach from the more usual one of tax incentives.

Idea	Details
People hope that investing in town's human capital will improve its economic future.	Keep middle class residents from leaving and attract new ones.  Attract businesses looking for skilled workforce.  Focus on labor supply is different from using tax incentives.

*How would reading with Idea-Details help kids if they used it on a regular basis?*

# Reading with Idea-Details

You try it!

## Rich School, Poor School

New figures show that there is a growing group of newly rich U.S. schools that are joining the tiny cadre of ultrawealthy institutions. As of '07 there are 76 colleges and universities with endowments that have passed \$1 billion — including 16 new members of that club such as Georgetown and the universities of Oklahoma and Missouri. But five at the top each have nearly \$6 billion more than any school outside that group: Harvard (\$34.6 billion), Yale (\$22.5 billion), Stanford (\$17.2 billion), Princeton (\$15.8 billion) and the University of Texas system (\$15.6 billion).

Among the endowments cited, Harvard's endowment—the largest overall—expanded by an amount last year that's more than Ivy League rival Cornell has altogether. Princeton now has more than \$2 million in the bank for every student. Stanford raised nearly \$1 billion during its last reported fiscal year alone. There is a "tremendous dispersion in wealth from the people right at the top to the lesser ones," said Ronald Ehrenberg, an expert on higher education economics at Cornell. "It falls off very, very quickly."

The figures come at a time when the advantages of that small group of superrich schools have been a contentious topic. There's been growing criticism from the public and some in Congress that the wealthiest schools should be dipping deep into their savings to hold down prices. But when Harvard and Yale recently announced they would do so by boosting aid for families earning well into six figures, they were sharply criticized.

"The publics lag woefully behind the prestigious privates not only in terms of faculty salaries, but in terms of their ability to attract the best graduate students and pay them competitive stipends," said Mark Yudof, chancellor of the University of Texas. Yudof says he doesn't mind competition, and his system is better off than most — its \$15.6 billion endowment is the largest by far of any public university. Texas leads a group of public institutions including the universities of Michigan (\$7 billion) and Virginia (\$4.3 billion) that have achieved real financial clout. But for a big university, the money doesn't go as far. Texas' funds support 300,000 students, more than 10 times the number at schools such as Harvard and Yale.

SOURCE: MSN.COM

# Idea-Details

## Pre-writing an expository essay

### TOPIC: Watching TarHeel Basketball

SUBTOPICS: 1. Getting the gear; 2. Making the food; 3. Arranging the room;  
4. Coaching the team

Idea	Details	Idea	Details
Getting the gear.	The sweatshirts. The mascots. The #1 hand. The scowling head.	Making the food.	Kettle corn for me. Seasoned regular pop-corn for Margot. Large glass of Wink for both of us. Sometimes Margot sets up the cooler.
Idea	Details	Idea	Details
Arranging the room.	Chair and couch. Pillows and blankets. Setting up the sound on the stereo. Setting up the picture on the TV.	Coaching the team.	Margot paces around the livingroom. Ursa barks at the TV and rips up a toy. I remain calm in case I have to treat an injury.

I knew my wife was a UNC Tar Heel fan when I met her. But I had no idea what that meant. I had no idea it meant wearing official sweatshirts—home colors for her, visitor’s colors for me. Or holding tight to two stuffed mascots during tense moments. Or wagging a “We’re #1!” hand when we made a great play. Or donning the scowling head of Ramses, the battering ram, even though it makes whoever wears it look like an idiot.

# Idea-Details

## Additional applications

### Details for Details

Idea	Details	Idea	Details	Idea	Details
Getting the gear.	The sweat-shirts. <b>The mascots.</b> The #1 hand. The scowling head.	<b>The mascots.</b>	Three-foot tall plush Ramses with scowl and arms akimbo.  <b>Six-inch tall Rammie from Margot's childhood.</b>	<b>Six-inch tall Rammie from Margot's childhood.</b>	Not much left of him.  Packed him in our suitcase this year when we traveled during March Madness.

### What is a detail?

*A detail is the answer to a question a reader might have.*

## Britney Spears Hospitalized

Britney Spears has been committed to two weeks in a psychiatric ward. Spears was taken to the psychiatric unit of UCLA Medical Center last week on the recommendation of her psychiatrist, and is being held under a California law that allows involuntary hospitalization if a patient poses a danger to herself or others. Spears' hospitalization comes after months of increasingly erratic behavior and reports of drug and alcohol abuse, which led a court to bar her from seeing her two young sons.

Question	Details
<i>What's happening to Britney?</i>	She has to spend two weeks in the psych unit at UCLA med center.
<i>How can they make her go to the hospital?</i>	Law allows her to be hospitalized if she's a danger to herself or others.
<i>Why does she need to be hospitalized?</i>	Months of erratic behavior and reported drug and alcohol abuse.
<i>What about her kids?</i>	She can't see her children.

# Idea-Details

Revising weak writing to make it stronger

## My Vacation

I took a vacation. I got to see some interesting things. I ate some good food. I had a lot of fun. I hope I get to go back.

Idea	Details	Idea	Details
<b>I took a vacation.</b> <i>(Where did you go? How did you get there? Who went with you? How long did you stay? Why did you go there?)</i>	My wife and I spent three days in Asheville, North Carolina It was about a four-hour drive. We went because my wife had always wanted to see the famous Biltmore Mansion at Christmas time.	<b>I got to see some interesting things.</b> <i>(What kinds of things? Why were they interesting? What was the most interesting thing?)</i>	The Biltmore Mansion and the Biltmore Estate. The winners of the National Gingerbread Baking Contest. The fanciest McDonald's I've ever seen. The scenery in the western part of North Carolina.
Idea	Details	Idea	Details
<b>I ate some good food.</b> <i>(What kind of food? Was it good? Was it expensive? What restaurants did you go to?)</i>	We stopped for lunch in Winston-Salem at a popular restaurant called "Sweet Potatoes." We had a tasty vegetarian lunch in downtown Asheville. We bought sweet snacks to take back to our hotel.	<b>I had a lot fun.</b> <i>(Why was it fun? What was the most fun?)</i>	It was very relaxed. We slept in late and stayed up late, too. Visiting the Biltmore Mansion was very interesting. We went to Waynesville where I bought a life-sized stuffed Black Lab because it looked just like our dog, Ursa.

*Adding details when we write is just like asking questions when we read.*

# Detailing

**1. A detail is the answer to a question a reader might have.** To add details, think of the questions readers might have about what you've written:

WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN	QUESTIONS READERS MIGHT HAVE
As I leaned over the cliff, I saw my dog, Gepetto, dangling there, 100 feet above the rocks below, terrified, trying to hold his grip by clawing at the frail branches of a tiny tree.	How did he get like that? Did he fall to the bottom? What did you do to help him? How did you feel?

**2. Use the Idea-Details strategy to add support.** Read over what you've written. Pick the best sentence or phrase and add to it.

IDEA	DETAILS
As I leaned over the cliff, I saw my dog, Gepetto, dangling there, 100 feet above the rocks below, terrified, and trying to hold his grip by <u>clawing at the frail branches</u> of a tiny tree.	The branches were just twigs, hardly more than a quarter inch thick, cracking and tearing each time he struggled to climb up. I couldn't imagine how they were supporting his weight.

**3. Use the Tell-Show strategy to add descriptive "showing" detail.** Showing is more specific; it helps readers make pictures in their mind.

TELL	SHOW
I was scared.	I froze on the spot. I felt my heart race and my breathing quicken, but I couldn't move. I tried to yell for help but nothing came out.

**4. Use the Detail Categories strategy for the widest range of options.** Generate details by thinking of categories like the following:

- Questions
- Sights
- Objects
- Explanations
- Actions
- Sounds
- Descriptions
- Attributes
- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Examples
- Etc.

# Idea-Details™

**1. Use the Idea-Details strategy for note taking.** Most textbooks are organized into short sections of ideas and supporting details:

Plants, algae, and even some bacteria use a process called photosynthesis to convert sunlight into energy. Photosynthesis occurs in two stages. In the first stage, light-dependent reactions capture the energy of light and use it to make high-energy carrier molecules called ATP that are used in the second stage. During the second stage, the light-independent reactions, sometimes called dark reactions, use the high-energy ATP molecules to capture carbon dioxide and create the beginnings of carbohydrates.

IDEA	DETAILS
Two stages of photosynthesis.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Light-dependent reactions use light to make molecules of ATP for the second stage.</li><li>2. Light-independent or dark reactions use ATP molecules to capture carbon dioxide and begin to produce carbohydrates.</li></ol>

**2. Use the Idea-Details strategy for constructed responses.** Here, the writer is answering the question, “Who won *The Battle of Antietam*?”

IDEA	DETAILS
The Union won the Battle of Antietam even though both armies lost the nearly same number of men.	<p>Kept Lee from invading the North.</p> <p>Kept Britain and France from supporting the South.</p> <p>Gave Lincoln a chance to introduce the Emancipation Proclamation.</p>

Even though both armies lost nearly the same number of men, the Union gained the most from the battle because it kept Lee from invading the North and kept Britain and France from supporting the South. It also gave Lincoln the chance to introduce the Emancipation Proclamation.

# **Additional Detail Strategies**

More Tools  
For Dealing with Details

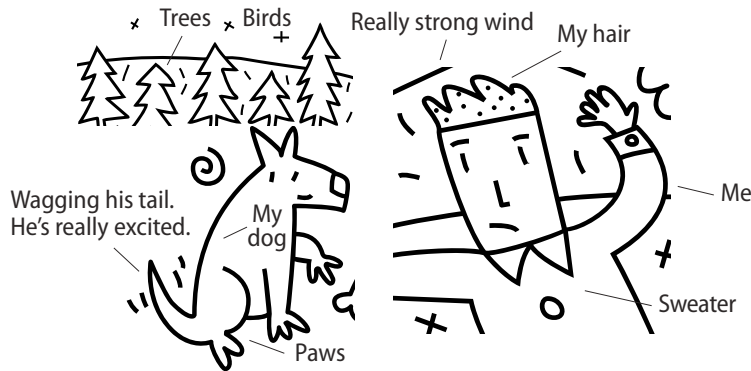


Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)



# Draw-Label-Caption™

**1. Draw first; label second; caption third.** Work fast. It's not an art project.



I'm throwing the Frisbee with my dog.

**2. Make sure the caption captures the scene.** Work hard to make these few words convey the most important information to your readers.

- **Good.** I'm throwing the Frisbee with my dog.
- **Better.** As I turn to throw the Frisbee, a huge gust of wind blows up.
- **Best.** No matter how windy it is, my dog still loves catching the Frisbee. But as I turn to throw it, a huge gust blows up that almost knocks me over, and I think for a minute that it might carry him away when he jumps in the air.

**3. Turn labels into sentences.** Any word or phrase becomes a sentence.

- **Birds.** The birds can hardly fly because the wind is so strong.
- **Trees.** They're flopping all over the place.
- **Wind.** A huge gust almost knocks me over.
- **Dog.** His tail is wagging and he's full of energy.

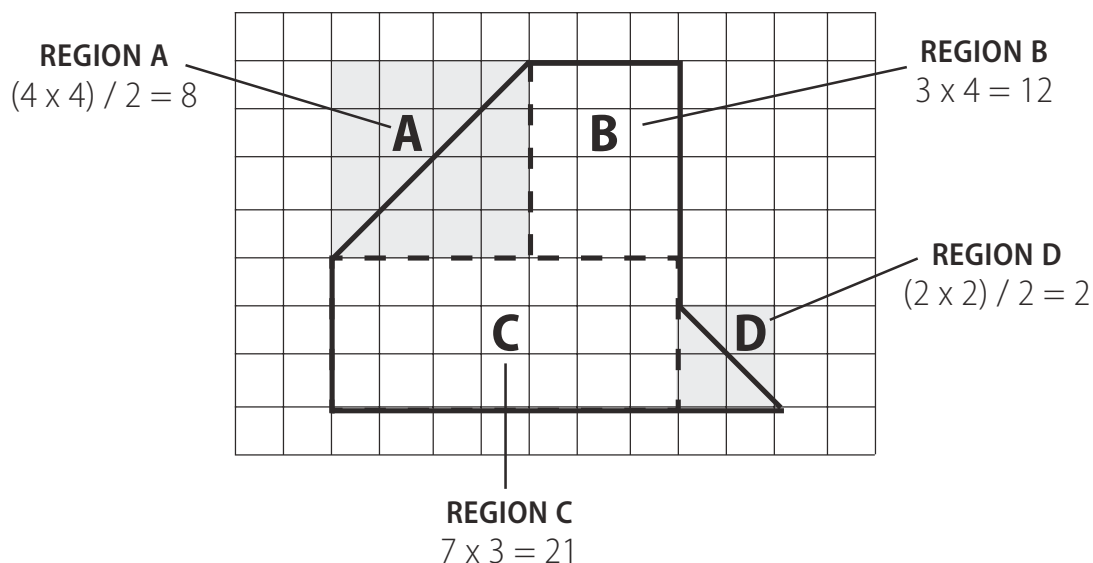
**4. Turn sentences into paragraphs.** Add new material as it comes to you.

No matter how windy it is, my dog still loves catching the Frisbee. But as I turn to throw it, a huge gust blows up that almost knocks me over, and I think for a minute that it might carry him away when he jumps in the air. His tail is wagging and he's full of energy. But I'm looking at the trees in the distance. They're flopping all over the place. The birds can hardly fly. Even with all the energy in the world, I don't think my little dog has much of a chance.

# Draw-Label-Caption™

**1. Use the Draw-Label-Caption strategy to convey information.** The strategy will work well any time diagramming is required.

## FINDING THE AREA OF AN IRREGULAR POLYGON



The total area is 43. To find the area, I created four rectangular regions and added their areas. In Regions B and C, I multiplied length and width. In Regions A and D, I also multiplied length and width, but I divided by 2 because the triangles I was measuring have exactly half the area of rectangles.

**2. Use the Draw-Label-Caption strategy for note taking.** In less formal situations, the strategy can be used to quickly capture information in a visual format.

**3. Use the Draw-Label-Caption strategy to capture sequences that illustrate a progression or process.** Draw-Label-Caption is ideal for diagramming ideas that unfold over time including things like steps in a geometry proof, stages in a scientific process, or sketches that reflect the narrative progression of historical events.

# Chaining

**1. Write sentence after sentence like links in a chain.** Take the best part of the first sentence and use it to write a second sentence:

SENTENCE #1	LINK (Best Part)	SENTENCE #2
My dog can do the most amazing things.	amazing things	If I throw a Frisbee, he can catch it in his teeth.
If I throw a Frisbee, he can catch it in his teeth.	catch it in his teeth	He snags it out of the air like a wild beast attacking his prey.
He snags it out of the air like a wild beast attacking his prey.	like a wild beast	It reminds me of those shark attack shows I've seen on TV.

**2. In addition to “best part” chains, you can also create “question” chains.** Think of a question a reader would ask and answer it.

SENTENCE #1	LINK (Question)	SENTENCE #2
I had a hard time training my dog to catch a Frisbee.	Why was it hard?	At first, when I threw it, he would just sit there.
At first, when I threw it, he would just sit there.	What did you do?	[So] I ran with the Frisbee and a treat in my hand and made him jump for it.
[So] I ran with the Frisbee and a treat in my hand and made him jump for it.	Did it work?	A week later, he could catch it if I threw it ahead a few feet.

**3. You can even chain paragraphs.** Make the next paragraph about the best part of the previous paragraph. Or create a paragraph that answers a question your reader might have.

# Tell-Show™

**1. Use the Tell-Show strategy to make inferences.** In this example, from President Truman's radio speech after the bombing of Hiroshima, what would you say about Truman's knowledge and intentions?

The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians. But that attack is only a warning of things to come. If Japan does not surrender, bombs will have to be dropped on her war industries and, unfortunately, thousands of civilian lives will be lost. I urge Japanese civilians to leave industrial cities immediately, and save themselves from destruction.

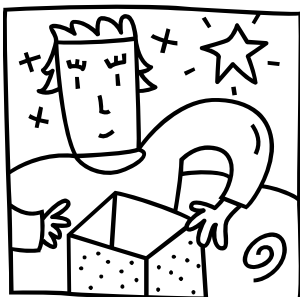
TELL	SHOW
...the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base.	Either Truman didn't know it was a city or he didn't want Americans to know we'd bombed civilians.
I urge Japanese civilians to leave industrial cities immediately,...	Either Truman plans to drop more bombs or he just wants to scare the Japanese into surrendering.

**2. Use the Tell-Show strategy to improve the quality of description.** Here, we add visual detail to a generic description of a science experiment.

TELL	SHOW
Mystery Powder #4 caused a reaction when we put it in the solution.	At first, nothing happened when we put the powder in. But after about 15 seconds, it started to bubble a little. As it bubbled up, the solution began to slowly turn green. After about a minute, the bubbles stopped and eventually the green color faded until the solution was almost totally clear again.

# Action-Feelings-Setting

**1. Start with a picture of yourself doing something.** Draw or make a picture in your mind. What are you doing? How do you feel? Where are you?



**Action.** I'm opening a present. I saved this one for last because I think it's the one I wanted most.

**Feelings.** I'm excited because it looks like the game console I wanted.

**Setting.** It's Christmas morning. There's torn paper all over the livingroom. My whole family is watching.

**2. Improve the action with the Idea-Details strategy.** Put the "action" on the left. On the right, add details in a bullet list.

IDEA	DETAILS
I'm opening a present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Struggle with the ribbon.</li> <li>• Rip into the paper.</li> <li>• Look for words on the box.</li> </ul>

**3. Use the Tell-Show strategy to "show" your feelings.** To show your feelings, instead of telling about them, describe how you looked at the time.

TELL	SHOW
I'm excited.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My hands are shaking.</li> <li>• My heart is pounding.</li> <li>• I start to sweat.</li> </ul>

**3. Put it all together.** Use your pre-writing to get started. Make changes. Move things around. Leave things out. Add new stuff. Make it sound great.

Christmas morning. Paper all over the livingroom. My family watching me as i unwrap my last present. It's the game cosole I asked for.

My hands shake as I struggle with the ribbon. My heart is pounding. I rip into the paper and look frantically for words on the box. Nothing. I start to sweat. It's a plain white box. Oh no! I can't believe it! It's a sweater.

# Action-Feelings-Setting™

**1. Use Action-Feelings-Setting to interpret important historical events.** The following paragraph describes negotiations at the end of World War II by representatives of the three victorious superpowers of the age.

When the “Big Three” met at Yalta to carve up Europe in the aftermath of World War II, the deck was stacked in Russia’s favor. Roosevelt was tired from the long journey and his health was failing; he would die just two months later. Churchill argued defiantly for free elections and the spread of democracy in Eastern Europe but eventually gave in to Stalin’s demands for Russian control. In contrast, Stalin was strong and energetic. With by far the largest army in Europe, he knew he could drive a hard bargain.

- **Action:** Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin negotiate control of Europe at the end of World War II.
- **Feelings:** Roosevelt was ill; exhausted from the long trip and in failing health. Churchill was frustrated with Stalin’s unwillingness to make concessions. Stalin was confident he could get whatever he wanted.
- **Setting:** Yalta was a resort city on the Crimean peninsula of the Black Sea in Russia. The Yalta Conference was the second of three post-WWII conferences attended by leaders from the United States, England, and Russia .

**2. Use Action-Feelings-Setting as a pre-write to capture important moments in history.** Here’s a brief description of the famous incident that touched off the Montgomery Bus Boycott and set the stage for the formal beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement.

- **Action:** Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus.
- **Feelings:** Parks was defiant; she was tired of giving in to rules she knew were unfair. The bus driver was surprised and angry.
- **Setting:** 6PM, Thursday, December 1, 1955, Montgomery, AL.

In Montgomery, AL, on the evening of December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks stood up for what she believed in by sitting down. A surprised and angry bus driver threatened to call the police if she didn’t give up her seat to a white person, but Ms. Parks defied the law and the custom of the time by refusing to move.

# Notes

# **The What-Why-How Strategy**

A Great Tool For Dealing with  
Logical Arguments in Expository and  
Persuasive Text



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)



# What-Why-How

When ya gotta prove it!

**Most logical arguments  
follow a “what-why-how” pattern.**

“The new MacBook Air laptop comptuer is not as revolutionary as Apple says it is. Competing laptops weigh less and more fully featured. For example, Toshiba and Sony sell ultraportables that are up to half a pound lighter and have more ports.”

## What

**“What” stands for “What do you think?”**

This is your opinion, your main idea, or your thesis in a research paper.

“The new MacBook Air laptop computer is not as revolutionary as Apple says it is.”

## Why

**“Why” stands for “Why do you think it?”**

These are the reasons you think what you think.

“Competing laptops weigh less and are more fully featured.”

## How

**“How” stands for “How do you know?”**

The set of examples, explanations, and evidence that make up your support.

“For example, Toshiba and Sony sell ultraportables that are up to half a pound lighter and have more ports.”

# Survey

*Where do your students need to make logical arguments?*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**HINT:** Answering an essay question, supporting a thesis statement, solving a math problem, verifying a hypothesis in a science experiment, supporting an inference in a novel with a reference to the text, answering constructed response questions on tests, writing a persuasive essay, etc.

# Reading with WWH

## Sifting through a science text

With all the talk about Global Warming, most people think the Greenhouse Effect is something bad that has to be stopped. But it actually has a positive side. Without it, the Earth wouldn't be warm enough for us to live. Because some of the sun's energy is trapped in the atmosphere, the average temperature is a comfortable 60 degrees. Without the Greenhouse Effect, the average temperature would drop to a chilly three degrees below zero. The problem is that human activity puts additional carbon dioxide and other so-called "Greenhouse Gases" into the air. These gases trap additional energy and the temperature goes up. In the 20th century, the Earth's temperature rose more than one degree. That doesn't sound like much, but it's enough to cause extreme weather, rising sea levels, and the melting of the polar ice cap.

What	Why	How
The Greenhouse Effect is both positive and negative.	It keeps the Earth warm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avg temperature is 60 degrees.</li><li>• Without the Greenhouse Effect it would be -3.</li></ul>
	Extra carbon dioxide and other gases cause temperatures to rise too high.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One degree in 20th century.</li><li>• Bad weather.</li><li>• High sea levels.</li><li>• Melting polar ice.</li></ul>

*Every "statement of proof" in math or science can be organized using a What-Why-How pattern. In science, the "How" column contains experimental evidence or other data. In math, the "How" column contains a reworking of the solution by other means or a check of the original calculations.*

# Reading with WWH

## Analyzing a persuasive argument

Cancel that gymnastics class, mom and dad. And think twice about those evening karate lessons. Signing your kids up for everything under the sun may seem like a smart move. But chances are, little Johnny and Janey are over-scheduled.

In a recent study, researchers at the University of Minnesota analyzed how kids spend their time and discovered that today's youngsters are significantly busier—as much as 57% busier in some cases—than their parents were at the same age a generation ago.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with getting kids out of the house to burn off energy. It's also great for kids to try new activities and learn new skills. But today's parents tend to overdo it.

Raising an active and engaged child may seem like good parenting. But many parents put too much structure on kids' activities. And kids miss out on unstructured play as a result. "Play is a key element in how children learn about themselves and the world," said Dr. Martin Applebaum, noted child psychologist, in his recent book entitled *The Health of America's Children*.

Play helps children grow intellectually and socially. But kids today are so busy, many have only a few hours a week to partake of this essential activity. More importantly, Applebaum says, "If we don't restore some balance to our children's lives, we may see future increases in mental health issues like depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder."

There's no doubt that children benefit from structured activities. But when we fill every hour of their lives with an endless string of commitments, we may be taking something from them they'll never get back: their childhood.

*Read the article all the way through first. Then, identify the main idea or thesis statement for the entire argument. Fill in "why" and "how" details after that. Some statements won't have complete support. Is that OK?*

# Thinking with WWH

## Supporting an inference from a story

Eddie had always been able to fly, but it wasn't until his fifth birthday party that he realized that it would turn out to be a bit of a social problem. Until that embarrassing day on the Johnson's lawn, Eddie's parents had treated his air-borne peculiarity as something of a childish whim. "Boy's gotta stretch out, learn what he can do," said his father. "I just worry that he'll hurt himself, you know, bump into the ceiling or get his eye poked out by a bird, I don't know..." said his mother. For the young Eddie, flying was just another discovery about his developing body, like learning that he could reach out his arm and ring the bell on his cradle railing, or finding that he loved the taste of peas. The first time his parents came into the nursery and found Eddie hovering a foot or two off the floor it came as a bit of a shock. But, after all, parents are forever discovering special little things about their children. Eddie's mother thought that perhaps they should take their son to see a specialist, but his father vetoed the idea. "It's not like anything's wrong with him, and I don't want him getting a complex about it."

What	Why	How
<i>(Inference)</i>	<i>(Reasons)</i>	<i>(Evidence from the Text)</i>
Eddie's parents seem a little strange. They don't react to their son's unusual ability the way I think normal parents would act.	They speak in clichés. They sound like people on a cartoon or in a sitcom. They don't seem very smart or responsible.	<p>"Boy's gotta stretch out, learn what he can do," said his father. "I just worry that he'll hurt himself, you know, bump into the ceiling or get his eye poked out by a bird, I don't know..." said his mother.</p> <p>and</p> <p>... his father vetoed the idea. "It's not like anything's wrong with him, and I don't want him getting a complex about it."</p>

*Every inference or prediction can be stated using the What-Why-How structure. The "How" column should contain the relevant evidence from the text.*

# What-Why-How

Pre-write for an expository or persuasive essay

What	Why	How
Allowance works out better when parents think carefully about how much their kids should get, what they get it for, and what they can spend it on.	Some kids have so much money that it really isn't good for them.	When kids have too much money to spend they spend it on things they don't need or that aren't good for them like junk food, weird clothes, or even drugs.
	Some kids get money just for doing normal stuff or for not getting in trouble.	Our neighbors give their kids money just to stop being bad. But it doesn't make them any nicer.
	Sometimes parents take away their kid's allowance and the kid doesn't think it's fair.	My parents took away my allowance once because I didn't clean my room but I just forgot to do it.
	Allowance is a good way for kids to learn about money.	I put half of my allowance into a special fund for college. My parents match what I put in. I've got over \$3000 saved up.

# The Three E's of Strong Support

**1. You can support an argument with examples, explanations, or evidence.** Though any support is better than nothing, the best arguments use all three techniques.

- **Examples.** These are things that represent the point we are trying to make. In writing, they are often presented as little stories sometimes called “anecdotes”.
- **Explanations.** If people don't understand a statement we've made, or if they don't quite believe it, they may ask us to give them an explanation.
- **Evidence.** You can think of evidence as anything you could present in a court of law: facts and figures, quotations, artifacts, etc.

**2. Examples appeal to an audience's emotions.** Here's a writer using examples to talk about a serious problem in professional baseball.

I wonder how Hank Aaron will feel when Barry Bonds breaks his home run record. Records are broken all the time, but it looks like Bonds may have cheated by taking performance-enhancing drugs. Baseball fans everywhere will probably feel a little uncomfortable. And now, no one will know who the real home run king is.

**3. Explanations satisfy our curiosity.** The writer's position here is that Bonds' new record will hurt the game of baseball. This explanation tells why.

Statistics mean more in baseball than in any other sport. And the home run record is the most important statistic of all. When a cloud of suspicion hangs over the man who holds it, a cloud hangs over the entire game. People will just feel bad about it. But there won't be anything they can do.

**4. Evidence.** Here, the writer will use statistics from surveys to give his thesis more credibility. People can always question the legitimacy of evidence, but for the most part, they don't. That's why statistical data is such a popular way to make a point.

Recent surveys tell the story best. More than half of the people who count themselves as serious baseball fans say they will not accept Barry Bonds as the legitimate home run king. And almost two-thirds of fans say the league has been too soft when it comes to the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

# **The Content-Purpose-Audience Strategy**

An All-Purpose Organizer  
For All Kinds of Text



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)



# Content-Purpose-Audience

## The universal strategy

C O N T E N T	<p><b>Main Idea</b></p> <p><i>The one most important thing the author wants the audience to know; the thesis in a formal research paper.</i></p>	<p><b>Key Details</b></p> <p><i>The one most important pieces of information that help the reader “unlock” the main idea.</i></p>
	<p><b>Think</b></p> <p><i>The purpose of the piece expressed in terms of what the author would like the audience to think after they have finished reading.</i></p>	<p><b>Do</b></p> <p><i>The purpose of the piece expressed in terms of what the author would like the audience to do after they have finished reading.</i></p>
P U R P O S E	<p><b>People</b></p> <p><i>The readers of the piece.</i></p>	<p><b>Questions</b></p> <p><i>The most important things readers want to know about the topic.</i></p>

# Content-Purpose-Audience

## Persuasive essay pre-write

C O N T E N T	<p><b>Main Idea</b></p> <p>All teachers working with readers below the 8th grade level, need well-stocked classroom libraries of leveled books.</p>	<p><b>Key Details</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the reading kids do needs to be at their independent reading level.</li> <li>• Individualized reading is the best way to help kids make progress.</li> <li>• Raising the reading levels of low-achieving kids should be our #1 goal.</li> <li>• Kids need many good books to choose from.</li> </ul>
P U R P O S E	<p><b>Think</b></p> <p>How can we expect kids to improve their reading skills, if we don't give them the books they need to become better readers?</p>	<p><b>Do</b></p> <p>Look into levelling systems like the Pinnell and Fountas K-8 system. Begin budgeting for a minimum of 500 books per classroom.</p>
A U D I E N C E	<p><b>People</b></p> <p>Administrators in schools or districts where significant percentages of students read below grade level.</p>	<p><b>Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why can't we just use a textbook or an anthology?</li> <li>• Why can't we just send kids to the library?</li> <li>• How will we fund this?</li> <li>• How will we know what books to buy?</li> <li>• How will we learn the leveling process?</li> </ul>

# Content-Purpose-Audience

## Prompted expository essay pre-write

C O N T E N T	<p><b>Main Idea</b></p> <p>In order to get along in a family, everyone has to make compromises and consider how the other people feel.</p>	<p><b>Key Details</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We rotate chores so no one has to do the worst jobs all the time.</li> <li>• We take turns on the computer and with the TV remote.</li> <li>• We try to be considerate about respecting each other's privacy.</li> <li>• When we have disagreements we settle them without arguing or fighting.</li> </ul>
P U R P O S E	<p><b>Think</b></p> <p>Making compromises isn't so bad when everyone has to do it. In fact, sometimes it makes our family feel closer because each of us is giving up something so that someone else can have what they want.</p>	<p><b>Do</b></p> <p>Be kind and generous with the people in your family. Don't be the person who always has to have things your way.</p>
A U D I E N C E	<p><b>People</b></p> <p>Kids who are growing up in large families.</p>	<p><b>Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's the secret to getting along in a big family?</li> <li>• How do you share things so that no one feels bad?</li> <li>• What's the biggest problem you've ever had and how did you fix it?</li> <li>• What do you do when you get angry with each other?</li> </ul>

# Content-Purpose-Audience

## Memoir/Narrative essay pre-write

C O N T E N T	<p><b>Main Idea</b></p> <p>The times in my life as a kid when I felt closest to my dad were the times when we would go fishing together.</p>	<p><b>Key Details</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We would often get up early on Saturday or Sunday mornings and go to Green Lake together.</li> <li>• The time my dad talked me into going fishing when he knew they had just stocked the lake.</li> <li>• My dad seemed really happy when we were fishing together.</li> </ul>
P U R P O S E	<p><b>Think</b></p> <p>More than anything else you do for your children, it's the time you spend with them that they will remember forever and value most.</p>	<p><b>Do</b></p> <p>Try to find more time to do things with your kids. If possible, see if you can come up with things you can do on a regular basis so your kids will always know they can count on having this time with you.</p>
A U D I E N C E	<p><b>People</b></p> <p>Parents with young children.</p>	<p><b>Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was it about fishing with my dad that made it so important to me?</li> <li>• What was one of the best times I ever had fishing with my dad?</li> <li>• Why was fishing better than other things we did together?</li> <li>• Do I still go fishing with my dad now that I'm grown up?</li> </ul>

# Content-Purpose-Audience

## Research paper pre-write

C O N T E N T	<p><b>Main Idea</b></p> <p>George Washington didn't want to be a hero or a famous person. He would rather have been a farmer and a family man than a great general or the President.</p>	<p><b>Key Details</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He lost most of the battles he fought.</li> <li>• He didn't really want to be President.</li> <li>• His favorite thing to do was to work on his farm.</li> <li>• He missed his family and didn't like being away from them.</li> </ul>
P U R P O S E	<p><b>Think</b></p> <p>The great heroes of American history are a lot more like regular people than how they are described in school and in the movies.</p>	<p><b>Do</b></p> <p>Think carefully about the way books and movies talk about American heroes. Learn about the real person, not just their reputation.</p>
A U D I E N C E	<p><b>People</b></p> <p>Middle school kids who are studying American history</p>	<p><b>Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did Washington get to be President?</li> <li>• Why didn't he want to be President?</li> <li>• What did he say about his family life and working on his plantation?</li> <li>• What did Washington care about most?</li> <li>• Why don't we usually learn about the personal side of George Washington?</li> </ul>

# Content-Purpose-Audience

## Research paper

### **There's No Place Like Home**

On a dark December night in 1776, as he led a barefoot brigade of ragged revolutionaries across the icy Delaware River, George Washington said, "Shift your fat behind, Harry. But slowly or you'll swamp the darn boat." He was talking to General Henry Knox (they called him "Ox" for short.) There's a painting of George Washington where he's standing up in a boat scanning the riverbank for Redcoats. I always thought he just wanted a good view. But I guess the reason he was standing was because he didn't have a place to sit down.

Finding a seat in his own boat was hardly the worst of General Washington's problems. It was cold and wet and icy, and his men were tired and didn't have warm clothes to wear or even enough food to eat. The Revolutionary War was hard on everyone, but it was hard on Washington most of all because he wanted to be home with his family.

From 1759, until he was called to fight in 1775, Washington lived with his wife Martha and her two children. Washington loved his big farm in Mt. Vernon, Virginia, and although he was one of our country's most brilliant generals, he was really just a farmer at heart. In a letter he wrote to a friend in England, he said, "I can nowhere find such great satisfaction as in working on my plantation." He didn't even want to be president. He said he would feel like a criminal going to his death if he took office. But everyone wanted him to do it, so he felt it was his duty to accept.

Washington was our president for the next eight years, but during that time he just wanted to get back home. He would spend weekends there whenever he could, and he made sure he got reports on the condition of his farm. He also liked getting letters from his family.

Then, in March of 1797, Washington finally got to go home for good. There were no more wars to fight, and John Adams was going to be president. Washington had been a good president, but he was tired of it. Even his granddaughter noticed how happy he was to be home. In a letter to a friend, she wrote, "Grandpa is much pleased with being once more Farmer Washington."

I always used to think of George Washington as a soldier and a politician, and I guess I always will. But he was really just a farmer. He reminds me a little of Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*. All she wanted was to get back home. And finally, the Wizard told her she could just click her red shoes three times and say, "There's no place like home." But George Washington and his men didn't have shoes when they crossed the Delaware River. Maybe if they did, history would have turned out completely different.

# Content-Purpose-Audience

A great revision tool

C O N T E N T	<p><b>Main Idea</b></p> <p>Work in this box if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your piece seems to ramble, is unfocused, or doesn't have a single controlling idea.</li> <li>• Your piece doesn't seem to have a point to it.</li> <li>• You think you might be writing about more than one topic.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Details</b></p> <p>Work in this box if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your piece seems too short.</li> <li>• You don't have many examples that support your main idea.</li> <li>• Your piece doesn't seem very interesting.</li> <li>• You can't distinguish between relevant and irrelevant details.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Think</b></p> <p>Work in this box if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You don't have an effective ending.</li> <li>• You don't know why you're writing this particular piece.</li> <li>• Your ending is just a restatement of your beginning or a summary of your main points.</li> <li>• Your piece just goes on and on.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Do</b></p> <p>Work in this box if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You're looking for a powerful ending that really moves your reader.</li> <li>• You want your piece to sound more persuasive.</li> <li>• What you're writing about is so important that readers need to take some action based on what you've told them.</li> </ul>
P U R P O S E	<p><b>People</b></p> <p>Work in this box if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You don't know the best way to start your piece.</li> <li>• You have the feeling that you're just writing instead of writing to a particular person or type of person.</li> <li>• You're not sure if what you're writing is appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Questions</b></p> <p>Work in this box if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People have a lot of questions after they've read your draft.</li> <li>• You've gotten started but you're not sure what to write about next.</li> <li>• You don't know how long your piece should be.</li> </ul>

# **The Six Principles of Research**

Guidelines For  
Better Reports and Projects



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)



# The Six Principles of Research

## Guidelines for better reports and projects

### **Principle #1: The researcher is an expert in the field**

We don't ask dentists to research industrial manufacturing methods, we don't ask accountants to study the human genome, and we don't ask graphic artists for their analysis of the economy. Researchers research the things they know best. You may not feel like a true expert in anything. But you do have specific knowledge in many areas: things you like, things you do for fun, things you are interested in, etc. Your home and family situations may also be helpful. When doing research in school, you don't have to be the best expert in the world, you just have to know more about something than your audience does.

### **Principle #2: The topic is narrow and manageable**

Most research has a very narrow focus. There aren't many people writing comprehensive histories of Europe or complete biographies of famous people. The reason for this is the time involved. It takes years, even decades, to write the history of an entire country or the biography of a famous person. And most school kids don't have that kind of time on their hands. Finding an appropriately narrow topic takes a bit of work. It might even take several days. But this is time well spent because if you settle on a topic that is too broad, it is likely that your research will take too long, and that your writing will be of poor quality.

### **Principle #3: The research answers specific questions**

The best research answers very specific questions, sometimes only one. How does a drug inhibit the spread of cancer? How can a company reduce the cost of a product? What were the causes of The Great Depression? How do I create teaching materials that help kids remember what they learn? How do I build an interactive website? Etc. We may even come up with questions that lead the research in a slightly different direction. That's just fine. In fact, the very best questioning sometimes redefines the research project entirely. Answering specific questions is the goal of all research. So principle #3 is the most important principle to follow.

# The Six Principles of Research

## Guidelines for better reports and projects

### **Principle #4: The audience is well defined**

Research wouldn't be done if someone wasn't interested in it. Knowing who that someone is, and the nature of their interest, helps researchers focus their efforts on the right questions and the best presentation of the answers. In most cases, you'll be doing your research for your peers. But you may come up with different audiences like your family or other people in your community.

### **Principle #5: Neither author nor audience knows the result**

Researchers don't research questions they already know the answers to. Nor do they research things their audience already knows. If you presented something you already knew, no research would be involved. If the information you presented was already known to your audience, there would be no need to present it. This just means that you may need to do a little research on your audience before you get too far into researching your topic. Ask people what they know already about your topic and what they would like to know next.

### **Principle #6: Presentation matches purpose**

To reach their audience most effectively, researchers use a variety of methods to present their results. Sometimes results are written in papers. But often they are presented in some kind of talk with handouts, slides, or other props. Sometimes researchers express their results in working models. It's appropriate to present research in written form when we need to reach people who cannot hear us speak or who may need to use our written word as evidence to support their own research. We may reach our audience more effectively, however, if we make an oral presentation. If we intend our research to prove a particular point, or solve a tangible problem, we may want to present a model of some kind. Presenting our research on the Internet is a great way to reach larger audiences and to display our results in an interactive format. How you decide to present your results will influence the information you gather and the way you organize it for your audience.

# Topic Equations™

**1. Identify different areas of interest.** Use the Like-Fun-Care About-Interested In chart to make lists.

<b>THINGS YOU LIKE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money</li> <li>• Clothes</li> <li>• Pizza</li> <li>• Music</li> <li>• Movies</li> <li>• Video Games</li> </ul>	<b>THINGS YOU DO FOR FUN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseball</li> <li>• The Mall</li> <li>• Internet</li> <li>• Shopping</li> <li>• Party</li> <li>• Watch TV</li> </ul>
<b>THINGS YOU CARE ABOUT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• My Dog</li> <li>• My Community</li> <li>• People being treated fairly</li> </ul>	<b>THINGS YOU'RE INTERESTED IN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computers</li> <li>• Cars</li> <li>• Math</li> <li>• College</li> <li>• Getting a part-time job</li> </ul>

**2. Interest + Subject = Topic.** Use the Topic Equations chart to connect your interests to the subject you are studying.

INTEREST	SUBJECT	TOPIC
Baseball	Civil War	Sports during the period; baseball as a popular pastime during the war.
Money	Civil War	Standard of living; purchasing power of families; types of money; taxes.
Part-Time Job	Civil War	Employment rates; job opportunities for young people; wages; careers.
College	Civil War	College opportunities; admissions process; costs; fields of study; trades.
Music	Civil War	Popular music of the period; famous performers; music as a business.

# A Swarm of Paparazzi

*Celebrities have long been hounded by photographers, but in the age of Britney, Lindsay, and Paris, the hunt has escalated into blood sport. Why have the paparazzi become so aggressive?*

## Why are some photographers called paparazzi?

The term has its origins in the 1960 Fellini film *La Dolce Vita*, which featured an unsavory photographer named Paparazzo—a dialect word for an irksome, buzzing mosquito. For decades, a few dozen paparazzi have made a living swarming around A-list hotspots in Los Angeles, New York, and London, waiting for a big star to show up. They then sell their photos—the more candid and embarrassing, the better—to supermarket tabloids, celebrity magazines, and photo agencies. But as the market for celebrity photos has exploded over the past decade, a more aggressive subset, known as “stalkerazzi,” has evolved. They hunt the famous wherever they go, by foot, by car, and even by helicopter. After Princess Diana was killed in a car crash in 1997 while being chased by paparazzi, there were calls for new laws to bar such pursuits. But the outcry faded, and since then, the paparazzi have gotten even more aggressive.

## What tactics do they use?

Paparazzi work a lot like private detectives, developing a network of informants, and plotting out the day-to-day movements of their quarry. One paparazzo posed as a relative of Michael Douglas to gain access to the hospital at which his son was born. Another camped out near Jennifer Aniston’s home and used a telephoto lens to shoot pictures through her window, capturing a topless shot. Now that their aggressive tactics have gotten them barred from the clubs and restaurants that the rich and famous frequent, paparazzi have been known to set off fire alarms to force an evacuation to the street, where they can photograph their targets. Paparazzi also have taken to pursuing celebrities in cars, whether they’re having a night out on the town or headed to the supermarket.

## How common are such chases?

In the last few years, there have been dozens of incidents. Lindsay Lohan suffered cuts and bruises when a paparazzo crashed into her car after she made a sudden U-turn. Scarlett Johansson sideswiped another car while fleeing swarms of paparazzi who had chased her for an hour. A paparazzo intentionally bumped into Catherine Zeta-Jones to force her out of her vehicle. Just last month, four paparazzi were arrested and charged with reckless driving while chasing Britney Spears.

## Why is the paparazzi corps growing?

It’s a simple matter of supply and demand. Celebrity-oriented magazines such as *People* and *Us Weekly* are more popular than ever, while newer gossip Web sites such as *TMZ.com* are drawing millions of users. These gossip-hungry publications get larger audiences when they can deliver,

say, a photo of a drunken Lohan or the first picture showing Angelina Jolie looking pregnant. As a result, paparazzi can charge more for such photos, and the promise of riches has attracted more people to the field. Ten years ago, there were a handful of celebrity photo agencies in L.A. and about 25 paparazzi trolling the streets. Today, there are about 200 paparazzi in L.A. and dozens more in New York.

## How much do they charge?

A garden-variety picture of Jerry Seinfeld sipping a latte at Starbucks may sell for a few hundred dollars. But a worldwide exclusive of a huge star in the right circumstances can yield tens of thousands of dollars or more. A shot of Lohan passed out in her car after leaving a bar went for \$100,000. Paris Hilton’s 2006 arrest (in handcuffs) sold for \$150,000. Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck’s first kiss captured on film went for \$300,000. Britney Spears images are now in such demand that she has fueled an entire cottage industry.

## Is there anything wrong with all this?

Aside from the obvious moral issues, there is a legitimate public-safety concern. As paparazzi chases through the streets of Los Angeles become more common, police say both the pursuers and pursued tend to ignore speed limits and other traffic laws—risking not only their own lives but also those of innocent bystanders. Citing safety, Hollywood actors are lobbying for laws barring paparazzi from following them around. But paparazzi say the safety issue is a smokescreen, and that celebrities simply resent that other people get to make money off their images. “They say it’s safety, but the real reason is they want to have control,” says Randy Bauer, who owns a celebrity photo agency in L.A. “They figure if they are going to have their face out there, they want a piece of the action.”

## Shouldn’t stars control their own images?

The courts have repeatedly held that public figures have a very limited right to privacy. So once celebrities venture out into public, free-press guarantees make it perfectly legal for photographers to take their picture. “If you’re getting paid \$20 million a movie,” says *Us Weekly* editor in chief Janice Min, “you have to accept the fact that you’re a public commodity.” Still, it’s hard not to feel some sympathy for celebrities who cannot pick up their kids at school, or run out for a quart of milk in their sweatpants, without being swarmed by paparazzi shouting insults and hunting for the least flattering image. “They want incendiary reactions,” says publicist Michael Levine, who has represented Demi Moore and other stars. “Why be a real journalist when you can call Alec Baldwin a moron and get a good photo of him smashing your head?”

SOURCE: THE WEEK

# The Five Facts of Fiction

Putting the story into history

## Points of Fact

- Kids spend more time studying fiction than they do studying any other single thing in the curriculum.
- Kids study fiction every year they're in school.
- Kids watch incredible amounts of fictionalized television and movies.
- We do almost nothing in school to leverage this knowledge and experience across the curriculum.

## Questions of Fiction

What's the difference between fact and fiction?

How do we know a made-up story about someone isn't true?

How do we know a true story about someone isn't made up?

As a reader, how is following a character in a story different from following a person in a biography?

As a writer, how is describing the life story of a fictional character different from describing the life story of a person from history?

# The Five Facts of Fiction™

**1. Fiction is all about characters.** Characters can be explored many ways but the “character trait” approach is probably the most common:

- **Physical Traits.** Anything relating to physical description.
- **Emotional Traits.** Overall mood, reactions to events, etc.
- **Social Traits.** Interactions with others, relationships, etc.
- **Intellectual Traits.** Thinking style, problem-solving ability, etc.

**2. Fiction is all about what characters want.** Sometimes characters want things, sometimes they want feelings, and sometimes they want both:

- **Things.** Possessions, money, a job, to be in a different place, etc.
- **Feelings.** Love, freedom, safety, any strong and positive emotion.

**3. Fiction is all about how characters get or don’t get what they want.**

The plot of a story unfolds as characters try to get what they want.

- **Does the character get it?** Yes, no, sort of? Explain.
- **How does it happen?** What is the sequence of events?.

**4. Fiction is all about how characters change.** Some change a lot, some change a little, some don’t seem to change at all.

- **Beginning.** Character’s state of mind at the start of the story.
- **Change.** How does the change happen?
- **Ending.** Character’s state of mind at the end of the story.
- **Lesson.** What lesson do we learn from the character’s experience?

**5. Fiction is all about a world an author creates.** What’s in this world? What kind of world is it?

- **People.** Other characters and their relationships.
- **Things.** Important objects, activities, occurrences, etc.
- **Places.** The many different settings in the story.
- **Ideas.** Themes a writers wants to explore.

# The Five Facts of Fiction™

**1. Fiction is all about characters.** In biography, we focus on one person. Here, we'll look at Abraham Lincoln as though he was a character in a novel.

Lincoln was hard working and practical. He persevered through failure in his career and tragedy in his family. Though he achieved many things, he never seemed happy. He may have suffered from depression. But that didn't stop him from being one of our greatest presidents.

**2. Fiction is all about what characters want.** What did Lincoln want in his life more than anything else?

Lincoln wanted to rise in politics as far as he could. But once he became president, his personal goals gave way to his obligation to a war-torn country. When the Civil War broke out at the beginning of his presidency, he wanted to hold the country together. Later on, he added to this goal the ideal of ending slavery.

**3. Fiction is all about how characters get or don't get what they want.** Did Lincoln get what he wanted?

Yes and no. The North won the Civil War and brought the South back into the Union by force. Lincoln oversaw the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution outlawing slavery. But he was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth early in his second term and so he did not get to oversee the important, and in many ways flawed, administration of Reconstruction as the country attempted to put itself back together.

**4. Fiction is all about how characters change.** How did Lincoln change?

Lincoln changed in his attitude toward slavery. Early in his life, he seemed willing to accept the idea of slavery existing in the Southern states. But by the middle of the war, he came to regard ending slavery as not only an important political act, but as an important moral act as well.

**5. Fiction is all about a world an author creates.** What kind of a world did Lincoln live in?

Lincoln lived through the most turbulent time in our nation's history. It was a world where people who shared many common values and circumstances became bitterly divided over an issue that had festered for almost 200 years.



# Informational Writing

## Creating role-based assignments

### 1. Role

Artist; Biographer; Biologist; Curator;  
Detective; Elected official; Historian;  
Expert in ...; Newscaster; Panelist;  
Parent; Political candidate; Product  
designer; Reporter; Self; Teacher;  
Tour guide; etc...

### 2. Format

Biography; Booklet; Brochure; Diary;  
Editorial; Fairy tale; Interview;  
Journal; Letter; Magazine article;  
Manual; Myth; Newspaper article;  
Novel; Play; Poem; Report; Short  
story; Textbook chapter; etc...

### 3. Audience

Friends; General public; Judge; Jury  
member; Parent; People from other  
cultures or time periods;  
Professionals in same discipline;  
Public figures; School board  
members; Supervisor; Young  
children; etc...

### 4. Purpose

Change action; Change thinking;  
Describe; Encourage; Entertain;  
Explain; Inform; Initiate action;  
Initiate thinking; Instruct; Persuade;  
Prevent; Tell a story; etc...

### 5. Approach

Analyze; Challenge; Classify;  
Compare; Conclude; Contrast;  
Defend; Define; Demonstrate;  
Evaluate; Interpret; Justify; Predict;  
Propose; Question; Reflect;  
etc...

Create assignments by selecting  
one or more items from each category.



# Informational Writing

## Creating role-based assignments

### Science

You are a **biologist** hired as a consultant to The Nature Conservancy. Create a **brochure** for **the general public** that **explains** the Greenhouse Effect and its impact on worldwide climatic conditions. **Analyze** current data on the effects of greenhouse gases and **predict** the consequences of widespread global warming. **Propose** alternatives to improve the situation that are consistent with current positions held by your client.

### Social Studies

You are a **newspaper reporter** from the Atlanta Constitution covering the battle of Gettysburg. You have followed the battle and have now just listened to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Write a **newspaper article** for **the people of Atlanta** that will **inform** them of the results of the battle and its impact on the Confederate war effort. **Describe** the battle and its aftermath. **Analyze** the balance of power between the two sides as a result of the battle. **Reflect** on the sentiments of Unionists and Confederates before and after Lincoln's speech.

### Math

You are an **expert in fractions**. Create a **chapter for a textbook** to be used by **4th grade students** that will **instruct** them in adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing fractions. Include an introduction that **justifies** the instructional method you choose.

Which of the five elements—role, format, audience, purpose, and approach—is most important to you?

# What is Good Writing?

Criteria Kids Can Use  
Across the Curriculum



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)

# What is Good Writing?

## Criteria Kids Can Use Across the Curriculum

### Ideas

A piece of writing with good ideas has:

- **An important main idea.** What's the one most important thing you want your reader to know? Why is it important to you? Why is it important to your reader? How will your reader figure out what it is?
- **Interesting details.** Which details are the most interesting? How do they help your reader understand your main idea? Have you answered your reader's most important questions?
- **Showing, not just telling.** Where do you use showing details? How does the showing help to improve the reader's understanding? Can the reader see what's happening?
- **A clear and meaningful purpose.** Why did you write this? Why is this a good reason to write something? When your readers have finished your piece, what do you want them to think and/or do?
- **Something surprising or unusual that works.** What is surprising or unusual about your piece? What have you included that might be different from other things your readers have read about the same topic?

Of these five elements, an important main idea and interesting details are the most crucial to a successful piece. By working on these two things you can often improve the other three at the same time.

# Theme and Main Idea

**1. A theme is a general idea a writer explores in depth.** Themes are usually stated as single words or phrases: Love; The Pain of Growing Up; Perseverance; Global Warming; The Puzzling Popularity of Paris Hilton; Etc.

**2. The main idea is the one most important thing the writer wants you to know.** If you could boil a text down to a single sentence that represented what it was all about, that would be the main idea. You know you've found one when you've found something that is:

- **A complete sentence.** It's not just the topic, it's what the author wants you to know about it.
- **A message, a moral, a lesson.** It's what the author most wants you to understand and benefit from.
- **Important to the writer.** What one thing does the writer seem to care about most?
- **Important to the reader.** What do you care about most in this particular text?

**3. Theme and main idea are different but closely related.** A theme is something important about which a writer has something to say; a main idea is the one most important thing the writer has to say about it.

THEME	MAIN IDEA
Love	Love conquers all.
The Pain of Growing Up	We find our own way in own time.
Perseverance	Slow and steady makes the grade.
The Puzzling Popularity of Paris Hilton	We'll always have Paris.

**4. Specific techniques help you find themes and main ideas.** Here are two approaches that work most of the time for most readers:

- **Main Idea.** Ask "What's the one most important thing the writer wants me to know?" Answer in the form of a complete sentence. Don't include "The main idea is...."
- **Theme.** Look for examples of the same thing coming up again and again. These are "motifs." What do they have in common? What general idea do they all refer to?

# What is Good Writing?

## Criteria Kids Can Use Across the Curriculum

### Organization

A piece of writing with good organization has five essential elements:

- **A beginning that catches your readers' attention and makes them want to read more.** How does your beginning catch your readers' attention? Why would your readers want to read more?
- **An ending that feels finished and gives your readers something to think about.** How does your ending make the piece feel finished? What will it make your readers think about? How does it let your readers know that what they've read is important?
- **A sequence that puts each part of a piece in the best order.** Can your readers easily identify the different parts of your piece? Does each part follow logically from one to the next? How does the sequence keep your readers reading?
- **Pacing that allows for the right amount of time for each part of a piece.** Why do you spend more time in some parts than in others? Are there places where you move ahead too quickly or hang on too long? Do the more important parts of your piece have more details than the less important parts?
- **Transitions that make a piece easy to follow from part to part.** How do you move from part to part? How do these transitions help your readers follow the piece? Have you arranged parts in a logical order so transitional phrases are rarely needed?

Of these five elements, a strong beginning and a satisfying ending are probably the most important. Transitional phrases will often come to you naturally as you write or, if you put things in the right order to begin with, you may not need them at all.

# Great Beginnings

## 1. Get your readers' attention and make them want to read more.

Work fast. You've got ten seconds to hook your readers and reel them in.

- **Example.** Mr. Simmons didn't know that when he got on the bus that morning, he wouldn't get off.
- **Example.** The Mariners pulled off a crazy come-from-behind victory last night to take first place.

## 2. Base your beginnings on successful models. Look at the kinds of beginnings other writers use and try their techniques in your own writing.

- **Question.** What would happen if you ate every meal at McDonald's for a month?
- **Description.** Dust and dirt were everywhere. Cobwebs clung to the corners. But it was home. For now.
- **Action.** He raced down the stairs, flew out the door, hopped on his bike, and hit the road.
- **Sound.** Beep, beep, beep, beep. The alarm chirped. But I was sound asleep and didn't hear it.
- **Dialog.** "What do you mean we're not going to Disneyworld!" my sister screamed.
- **Feelings.** I had never been so terrified in my life. I still get goosebumps thinking about it.
- **Thoughts.** Ooops! I'm in trouble now, I realized, as I surveyed the broken glass on the kitchen floor.
- **List.** Sore muscles, mosquito bites, no video games. That's what camping means to me.

## 3. Combine strategies for richer beginnings. It's good to try more than one beginning for a piece. Sometimes, you can even put them together.

- **Thoughts.** It's odd to be so hungry, I thought to myself, especially after eating those nine burritos.
- **Description.** Light flooded the dark kitchen and cool air hit my face as I bent down to peer inside.
- **Question.** Would I find the tasty snack I was looking for, or had someone cleaned out the fridge?

### Three Beginnings Combined

Light flooded the dark kitchen, and cool air hit my face as I bent down to peer inside. Would I find the tasty snack I was looking for, or had someone cleaned out the fridge? It's odd to be so hungry, I thought to myself, especially after eating those nine burritos. But here I was looking for a tenth.

# Happy Endings

## 1. Wrap things up and give your readers something to think about.

Tie up loose ends but don't stop there. Send 'em off with something to chew on.

- **Example.** It took a while to convince Grandpa that his hearing aid hadn't been stolen by pirates. But we never did figure out what to do with all that jello.
- **Example.** As this season of *Miracles* comes to a close, there's just one question on everyone's mind: Can they do it again next year?

## 2. Base your endings on successful models. Look at the kinds of endings other writers use and try their techniques in your own writing.

- **Question.** Why didn't I think it through more carefully? When will I ever learn my lesson?
- **Description.** Dead quiet. Nobody said a word. We just listened to the sound of the rain and wondered.
- **Remember.** If you're ever in that situation again, just remember: It's the green wire not the red wire.
- **Future.** We don't know when we'll run out of oil. But we know we'll run out some day—and soon.
- **Feelings.** He was laughing so hard I thought he'd fall over. And everyone else was laughing, too.
- **Advice.** Flu season is right around the corner. So get your shot before it gets you.
- **Lesson.** The guy who said "Slow and steady makes the grade" probably wasn't working on deadline.
- **Do.** Take a few minutes at the end of each day and think of all the good things in your life.

## 3. Don't go back, go beyond. Don't restate your beginning at the end, your reader already read it! Instead, take your reader just a little bit further.

**Beginning.** My father never had much money but he loved giving gifts. As a boy, I imagined him spending his last pennies on treasures just for me. As I grew up, I realized that the joy he took in gift giving had little to do with sacrifice. But my sense of him as a generous man never diminished.

**Ending.** I felt then as I do today that I missed something in my father. He was a hard man to understand. And an even harder man to love. But when I think about missing the value of a gift he gave me, I wonder what other gifts I missed. And how valuable they might be if I could find them now.

# What is Good Writing?

## Criteria Kids Can Use Across the Curriculum

### Voice

You know your writing has strong voice when:

- **Your readers can tell you care about your topic.** Why did you pick your topic? Why is it important to you? Where in your writing will your readers be able to see how much you care about it?
- **Your writing is filled with strong feelings and honest statements.** What are your strongest feelings in this piece? Where do you express those feelings? Are you really being honest? Where does your honesty come through?
- **Your writing is individual and authentic.** Does the writing sound like you? Are you being yourself? What parts of the piece sound like only you could have written them?
- **Your writing displays a well-defined personality.** What parts of your personality come through in this piece? Where do those parts show up? What will readers think they know about who you are?
- **Your writing has an appropriate tone for your purpose and your audience.** Are you addressing your readers in a way that will make them feel honored and respected? Is it possible that anything you've written could offend your readers or otherwise discourage them from reading?

You can do a lot to improve your voice by concentrating on the first two items in this checklist. For most of us, our writing comes alive when we have topics we care about and when we communicate our feelings about them accurately and honestly.



# Hearing Voices

When describing Voice and Tone, think about the person behind the words and how that person comes across to the reader. What are the primary emotions conveyed? How would you describe the writer's personality? How do you want readers to feel as they receive your message?

## **1. Realistic, Fatherly, Responsible**

Most of us have goals in life that call for an investment of a significant amount of time and financial resources. We may have done some planning. However, our natural tendency is to focus on only one or two goals that are most important to us right now. For most people, developing and maintaining a plan to achieve all of their financial goals is a daunting challenge—one we delay taking on.

## **3. Upbeat, Salesy, Confident**

In today's real estate market, you need to work with a company you can trust that has professionals you can rely on. Whether you are buying or selling your primary residence, a second home, or relocating to a new neighborhood, we can help make your homeownership dreams come true.

## **5. Mature, Solid, Stately**

Our company has a long-demonstrated commitment to the institutional marketplace, including corporations, public funds, Taft-Hartley plans, foundations and endowments. Strong investment performance, excellent service, and a choice of quality products have helped create superior value for our institutional clients, many of whom have been with us for more than 20 years.

## **2. Technical, Impersonal, Lawyerly**

This option offers a 4-year CDSC period based on the date of each purchase payment, and death benefit flexibility. On annuity anniversaries 5 through 10 and subject to program rules, you can elect an optional death benefit (for an additional fee), or cancel an optional death benefit elected on the issue date. Please see the prospectus for more details. Subject to state availability.

## **4. Caring, Compassionate, Thoughtful**

If something happens to you, life insurance can help ensure that your family will be able to stay in the home and neighborhood where they feel comfortable, and won't have to make rash decisions about moving or selling during a time of emotional stress.

## **6. Friendly, Reassuring, Encouraging**

Does the idea of financial planning for the future seem complex or confusing? Are you worried that you won't be able to save the money you need to send your children to college or to have a comfortable retirement? Well, you're not alone, and there are steps you can take to get started. Learning about the kinds of savings, investment, and retirement plans available to you is a big step on the road to financial freedom.

# Voice Lessons

## 1. Realistic, Fatherly, Responsible

Most of us have goals in life that call for an investment of a significant amount of time and financial resources. We may have done some planning. However, our natural tendency is to focus on only one or two goals that are most important to us right now. For most people, developing and maintaining a plan to achieve all of their financial goals is a daunting challenge—one we delay taking on.

**KEY ELEMENTS:** Begin with a universally true statement and then bring up a point the reader may not have considered: “However,...” or “But...”. Make the reader feel the seriousness of the issue at hand. Know how the reader is thinking and what the reader may not be thinking about. Commiserate with the reader about the “challenge”.

Many of us think of investment planning as something that can wait. After all, retirement may be decades away. But planning for the future is more effective when we begin as early as possible. Looking ahead twenty, thirty, or even forty years may seem challenging. But starting early is the key to creating the financial future you’re looking for. By investing in yourself today, you’ll provide a better tomorrow—for you and your family.

## 2. Technical, Impersonal, Lawyerly

This option offers a 4-year CDSC period based on the date of each purchase payment, and death benefit flexibility. On annuity anniversaries 5 through 10 and subject to program rules, you can elect an optional death benefit (for an additional fee), or cancel an optional death benefit elected on the issue date. Please see the prospectus for more details. Subject to state availability.

**KEY ELEMENTS:** Longer sentences. Many “in-between” clauses that narrow meaning or specify conditions. Use of terms and acronyms a normal reader may not fully understand. Use of conditional language and warnings. Refers reader to other sources like a prospectus.

Depending on the options you select, and subject to state regulations, you may elect different benefit combinations during a renewal period beginning thirty days prior to the 5th, 10th, and 15th anniversaries of your selection of the original annuity program. Certain changes may require additional fees. Please see the prospectus for more details.

# Voice Lessons

## 3. Upbeat, Salesy, Confident

In today's real estate market, you need to work with a company you can trust that has professionals you can rely on. Whether you are buying or selling your primary residence, a second home, or relocating to a new neighborhood, we can help make your homeownership dreams come true.

**KEY ELEMENTS:** Makes bold promises. Sites circumstances ("In today's...") that make buying a product or using a service an imperative. Solves all the reader's problems in a given area. Offers comprehensive solutions.

In today's rapidly changing equity markets, you need solid advice from experienced professionals. Our award-winning team of advisors will help you optimize the value of your trades regardless of the investment vehicles you select.

## 4. Caring, Compassionate, Thoughtful

If something happens to you, life insurance can help ensure that your family will be able to stay in the home and neighborhood where they feel comfortable, and won't have to make rash decisions about moving or selling during a time of emotional stress.

**KEY ELEMENTS:** Demonstrates an understanding of a difficult situation. Offers reasonable and logical solutions. Empathizes with the reader. Provides peace of mind.

One of the biggest fears we have about retirement is the fear of running out of money. An annuity can put that fear to rest by providing consistent income guaranteed to last for the rest of your life.

# Voice Lessons

## 5. Mature, Solid, Stately

Our company has a long-demonstrated commitment to the institutional marketplace, including corporations, public funds, Taft-Hartley plans, foundations and endowments. Strong investment performance, excellent service, and a choice of quality products have helped create superior value for our institutional clients, many of whom have been with us for more than 20 years.

**KEY ELEMENTS:** Uses lists to strengthen statements. Quotes long periods of time to assure readers of reliability. Uses reassuring language like “quality”, “value”, and “commitment”. Reads like a recommendation or resume.

With more than a hundred years of responsible service to both individual and institutional investors, our company is well-positioned to meet your needs in times of change and uncertainty. Using powerful investment vehicles, research-proven strategies, and a century’s worth of good judgment and common sense, we offer the choices you want with the reliability you need to invest with confidence.

## 6. Friendly, Reassuring, Encouraging

Does the idea of financial planning for the future seem complex or confusing? Are you worried that you won’t be able to save the money you need to send your children to college or to have a comfortable retirement? Well, you’re not alone, and there are steps you can take to get started. Learning about the kinds of savings, investment, and retirement plans available to you is a big step on the road to financial freedom.

**KEY ELEMENTS:** Uses questions to draw the reader in? Identifies with the reader and the reader’s problems. Assures reader that problems can be solved. Provides solutions that readers can avail themselves of without much trouble.

Are you unsure about meeting the financial needs you’ll have in retirement? Do you wonder about the cost of maintaining a comfortable lifestyle or leaving assets to your children when you die? Many people do. But the answers to your questions aren’t as difficult as they seem. With options like life insurance, annuities, and tax-deferred savings plans, you can take simple steps now to ensure your financial future.

# What is Good Writing?

## Criteria Kids Can Use Across the Curriculum

### Word Choice

You know you're doing a great job with words when your writing has:

- **Strong verbs that show how actions are performed.** Where have you used strong verbs? How do they show readers how actions are performed?
- **Words that make ideas more specific.** Where is your language most specific? How do these places differ from places where your language is more general?
- **Groups of words readers find meaningful and memorable.** Where do you find groups of words that are especially meaningful and memorable? What makes these phrases so effective?
- **"Just right" words used in just the right way.** Where have you reworded parts of sentences to make them more effective? Where have you been able to make your writing more efficient by removing words that were redundant or otherwise unnecessary?
- **Appropriate language for purpose and audience.** Who is your audience? Why are you writing to them? How do they want to be addressed? How do they speak and write? Have you used any words that your readers may find offensive?

The way to approach improving your use of words is very gradually, perhaps even one word at a time. Concentrating on small victories in the war on words has had two big advantages: it keeps you from going crazy looking for every nitpicky little problem; and it helps you gain confidence in your ability to find and fix the common errors.

# Word Choice Exercises

Playing with words and choices

## One-Syllable Words Only

What if there was a rule that said you had to use small words when you wrote? Could you still say what you had to say? We tend to think big words are worth more than small ones. But this is not true. Small words can do big things. They are clean, they are clear, they are strong, they are true. They help us write the way we talk, say what we mean, be who we are.

## No “E”

On a pitch black January night, at an hour most inhabitants of Bolin Hollow might find unusual for such activity, a stout man with a small black bag limps slowly out of his yard, down a narrow path, past a row of shops, and into a thick wrap of fog. Unusual as it is, this nocturnal stroll is anything but unusual for Mr. Bostwick; his work brings him to many locations around this small town, and almost always at odd hours. Night is normal for Mr. B; in fact, many in his occupation find sunlight distracting—too much watching, too much human contact. But only fog follows him now, and though his gait is awkward—a motion similar to that of a man for whom drinking was a nightly pursuit—nothing will stop him from carrying out his duty.

# What is Good Writing?

## Criteria Kids Can Use Across the Curriculum

### Sentence Fluency

You know you're writing great sentences when you:

- **Use a variety of different beginnings.** Do you start different sentences with different words? Do you start different sentences with different parts of speech? Do you ever start three sentences in a row with the same words or parts of speech?
- **Use a variety of different lengths and structures.** Do you mix long, short, and medium-length sentences throughout your writing? Are your sentences made up of different numbers of parts?
- **Structure your sentences so they're easy to understand.** Have you arranged the information in your sentences so it's as easy as possible for your readers to understand? In long sentences, are you using connecting words and punctuation to string together sentence parts in ways that are helpful to your readers?
- **Create writing that is easy to read expressively and that sounds great when read out loud.** How does your writing sound when you read it out loud? Is it easy to read with good expression? What are the most expressive parts?
- **Use rhyme, alliteration, and other "sound" effects.** Where are you using rhyme, alliteration, and other "sound" effects? How do they make your sentences more interesting to read? Are you being careful not to overuse these techniques?

While each of these five elements is a necessary part of the care and feeding of healthy sentences, the true measure of sentence success is how your writing sounds when it's read out loud.

# Sentence Combining

Turn multiple sentences into one

---

**1**

- a. Mr. Funston stared blankly at the whiteboard.
- b. Mr. Funston daydreamed about a warm winter vacation.

---

Staring blankly at the whiteboard, Mr. Funston daydreamed about a warm winter vacation.

---

**2**

- a. Mr. Funston loved to travel with his pet schnauzer.
- b. Traveling with his pet schnauzer made his trips more complicated.

---

**3**

- a. Mr. Funston's dog had unique abilities.
  - b. Mr. Funston's dog could order food from a restaurant.
  - c. Mr. Funston's dog could arrange day trips to exotic places.
  - d. Mr. Funston's dog played a mean game of Texas Hold'em.
-



# Sentence Combining

Turn multiple sentences into one

---

**4**

- a. Mr. Funston was daydreaming at the board.
  - b. The bell went off.
  - c. Mr. Funston was taken by surprise.
  - d. Two dozen noisy students flooded the classroom.
- 

---

**5**

- a. Mr. Funston was eager to return to his vacation planning.
  - b. Mr. Funston told the kids they could go to the library.
  - c. Mr. Funston sat down at his computer.
  - d. Mr. Funston booted up his favorite travel planning website.
- 

---

**6**

- a. Mr. Funston booked a vacation in the Bahamas in just a few minutes.
  - b. Mr. Funston sent an instant message to his dog.
  - c. Mr. Funston told his dog to begin packing.
  - d. Mr. Funston told his dog to find their passports.
-

# Analyzing Sentence Structure

## A grammar-free approach

*On a bitter cold winter morning, Malcolm Maxwell, a young man of simple means but good intentions, left the quiet country town in which he'd been raised, and set off on the bold errand he'd been preparing for all his life.*

You'll notice that it's made up of several different parts. In our system, there are four kinds of sentence parts you can use:

- **Main Parts.** These parts contain the main action: "Malcolm Maxwell,... left the quiet country town in which he'd been raised,..."
- **Intro Parts.** These parts often introduce other parts, especially main parts: "On a bitter cold winter morning,..."
- **In-Between Parts.** As the name implies, these parts go in between other parts. They feel like a slight interruption: "...a young man of simple means but good intentions,..."
- **Add-On Parts.** These parts convey additional information: "...and set off on the bold errand he'd been preparing for all his life."

Using our system, we can describe the structure of the sentence like this: Intro + Main + In-Between + Main + Add-On. Here again are those five parts written out in order:

- **Intro Part.** "On a bitter cold winter morning,"
- **Main Part.** "Malcolm Maxwell,"
- **In-Between Part.** "a young man of simple means but good intentions,"
- **Main Part, continued.** "left the quiet country town in which he'd been raised,"
- **Add-On Part.** "and set off on the bold errand he'd been preparing for all his life."

You can create new sentences by combining the different kinds of parts in different ways. To make longer sentences, just add more parts.

# Sentence Structuring

**1. Sentences are made of parts.** There are four types of sentence parts: lead-in parts, main parts, in-between parts, and add-on parts.

On a bitter cold winter morning, Malcolm Maxwell, a young man of simple means but good intentions, left the quiet country town in which he'd been raised, and set off on the bold errand he'd been preparing for all his life.

- **Main Parts.** These parts usually contain the main action of the sentence: "Malcolm Maxwell, . . . left the quiet country town in which he'd been raised, . . ."
- **In-Between Parts.** These parts go in between other parts. They feel like a slight interruption: "...a young man of simple means but good intentions, . . ."
- **Intro Parts.** These parts introduce other parts, especially main parts: "On a bitter cold winter morning, . . ."
- **Add-On Parts.** These parts provided added information: "...and set off on the bold errand he'd been preparing for all his life."

**2. Parts go together to make patterns.** Use the patterns by replacing the model content with your own writing. Here are a few to start with:

- **Intro + Main.** As class began, Mr. Funston dreamed of Christmas vacation.
- **Main + Add-On.** He stared at the blank faces of his students, perplexed that he had nothing whatsoever to teach them today.
- **Main + In-Between + Main.** The Lesser Antilles, he realized, would be the perfect place for a warm winter hiatus.
- **Main + Add-On + Add-On.** He saw himself on the beach, baking in the mid-day sun, enjoying tasty snacks and refreshing beverages.
- **Intro + In-Between + Main.** Ten minutes later, having dismissed his students early to lunch, he sat at his computer hunting and pecking his way to a good deal on a two-week trip to the West Indies.
- **Main + In-Between + Add-On.** Mr. Funston leaned back in his big teacher chair, forgetting about the twelve pounds he'd put on at Thanksgiving, and immediately tumbled backward into the Halloween bulletin board he'd neglected to take down.

# Analyzing Sentence Structure

## A grammar-free approach

### **A Perfect Day for a Wedding**

It was a perfect day for a wedding. The sky was a soft light blue and the occasional breeze swept gently over the lawn. People clustered around the metal folding chairs set up on the grass, talking and laughing. Most of the guests I had never seen before, but I picked out my family members and ran to greet them, hugging them one by one. I spotted my uncle dressed in a smart-looking black suit. My aunt-to-be was in a long beautiful white gown. I felt like a pot of hot water on a stove, ready to boil over with excitement at any moment.

The second piece was written  
by following the sentence structure of the first.

### **A Perfect Day for Fishing**

It was a perfect day to go fishing. The sun was shining and the lake looked as smooth as glass. Fishermen were out in their row boats, sliding slowly through the morning mist. This was my favorite thing to do on a Sunday morning, and I was especially happy today, looking forward to several hours alone with my dad. I saw a fish jump out in the distance. Other fish made small rings on the surface. I prepared for my first cast, eager to see if I could hit the spot where the fish had just jumped.

# Analyzing Sentence Structure

## A grammar-free approach

It was a perfect day for a wedding.

**(1 PART)**  
**MAIN**

It was a perfect day to go fishing.

The sky was a soft light blue and the occasional breeze swept gently over the lawn.

**(2 PARTS)**  
**MAIN + ADD-ON**

The sun was shining and the lake looked as smooth as glass.

People clustered around the metal folding chairs set up on the grass, talking and laughing.

**(2 PARTS)**  
**MAIN + ADD-ON**

Fishermen were out in their row boats, sliding slowly through the morning mist.

Most of the guests I had never seen before, but I picked out my family members and ran to greet them, hugging them one by one.

**(3 PARTS)**  
**MAIN + ADD-ON**  
**+ ADD-ON**

This was my favorite thing to do on a Sunday morning, and I was especially happy that day, looking forward to several hours alone with my dad.

I spotted my uncle dressed in a smart-looking black suit.

**(1 PART)**  
**MAIN**

I saw a fish jump out in the distance.

My aunt-to-be was in a long beautiful white gown.

**(1 PART)**  
**MAIN**

Other fish made small rings on the surface.

I felt like a pot of hot water on a stove, ready to boil over with excitement at any moment.

**(2 PARTS)**  
**MAIN + ADD-ON**

I prepared for my first cast, eager to see if I could hit the spot where the fish had just jumped.

# What is Good Writing?

## Criteria Kids Can Use Across the Curriculum

### Conventions

Correct conventions involves using:

- **End-of-sentence punctuation that shows where ideas start and stop.** Have you used capital letters and periods to show where your ideas begin and end? Have you remembered to put question marks at the ends of questions?
- **Middle-of-sentence punctuation that shows where parts of ideas start and stop.** Do you use commas to show where parts of sentences begin and end? Do you use dashes to emphasize in-between and add-on parts? Do you use colons like an equals sign to show that one part of a sentence is an introduction to or description of another part?
- **Capitalization that indicates important words.** Have you capitalized the names of people, places, and things that are one-of-a-kind? Have you capitalized first, last, and important words in titles?
- **Paragraphs that group related ideas together.** Is your piece written in paragraphs? Have you used paragraphs to group related ideas?
- **Dialog punctuation that indicates who is speaking and what is being said.** Have you put quotation marks around only those words that are actually spoken? Have you started a new paragraph for each new speaker?

Don't feel that you have to learn all of this immediately. You've got plenty of time over the rest of your writing life to become a proficient punctuator.

# Conventions Reading™

**1. Conventions reading.** Saying the punctuation along with the words is no way to read. But it's a fun and easy first step in learning to punctuate.

On a dark December night in 1776, as he led a barefoot brigade of ragged revolutionaries across the icy Delaware River, George Washington said, "Shift your fat behind, Harry. But slowly or you'll swamp the darn boat."

[NEW PARAGRAPH] [INDENT] [CAPITAL] on a dark [CAPITAL] december night in 1776 [COMMA] as he led a barefoot brigade of ragged rev [HYPHEN] olutionaries across the icy [CAPITAL] delaware [CAPITAL] river [COMMA] [CAPITAL] george [CAPITAL] washington said [COMMA] [QUOTE] [CAPITAL] shift your fat behind [COMMA] [CAPITAL] har ry [PERIOD] [CAPITAL] but slowly or you [APOSTROPHE] ll swamp the darn boat [PERIOD] [QUOTE] [END OF PARAGRAPH]

**2. Conventions inquiry.** What do you know? What do you want to know?

EXAMPLE	RULE	QUESTIONS/COMMENTS
December	Name of a month	What about days? And written out numbers?
George Washington	Name of a person	Any person? Or just famous people?
General	A title	Sometimes titles are not capitalized. Why?
"Ox"	A nickname	It's still a name even if it's not his real name.

**3. Conventions rules.** With a little practice, you can create your own writing rule book. Most rules sound like this: "Use a [name of mark] to/when/for [description of writing situation]." For example, "Use commas to separate items in a list." or "Use a capital letter for names, places, the word "I", things that are one-of-a-kind, and the beginning of a sentence."

**4. Edit Passes.** When you edit your writing, focus on one problem at a time in this order: words (left out, repeated, wrong, etc.), sentences, commas, capitalization, paragraphs, spelling, dialog, and "the little stuff."

# Conventions Reading

## You try it

Cancel that gymnastics class, mom and dad. And think twice about those evening karate lessons. Signing your kids up for everything under the sun may seem like a smart move. But chances are, little Johnny and Janey are over-scheduled.

In a recent study, researchers at the University of Minnesota analyzed how kids spend their time and discovered that today's youngsters are significantly busier—as much as 57% busier in some cases—than their parents were at the same age a generation ago.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with getting kids out of the house to burn off energy. It's also great for kids to try new activities and learn new skills. But today's parents tend to overdo it.

Raising an active and engaged child may seem like good parenting. But many parents put too much structure on kids' activities. And kids miss out on unstructured play as a result. "Play is a key element in how children learn about themselves and the world," said Dr. Martin Applebaum, noted child psychologist, in his recent book entitled *The Health of America's Children*.

Play helps children grow intellectually and socially. But kids today are so busy, many have only a few hours a week to partake of this essential activity. More importantly, Applebaum says, "If we don't restore some balance to our children's lives, we may see future increases in mental health issues like depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder."

There's no doubt that children benefit from structured activities. But when we fill every hour of their lives with an endless string of commitments, we may be taking something from them they'll never get back: their childhood.



# Essential Information

The most important stuff you need to know

## Punctuating Sentences

You know you've come to the end of a sentence when:

- You come to a full stop.
- The words make sense.
- Your voice slopes down.
  - Up and at the end for a question mark.
  - Straight up for an exclamation mark.
- Your voice slows down.

The cure for run-on sentences is slow and careful reading.

It's better to fix problems at the end of a sentence  
before you fix problems in the middle.

To untangle confusing sentences start in the middle with  
the verb and work back toward either end from there.

Try to keep your sentences as short  
and simple as possible.

# Essential Information

The most important stuff you need to know

## Using Commas

Use commas to:

- **Separate parts in a sentence.** “Many sentences, like this one, for example, are made up of several parts.”
- **Separate items in a list.** “For breakfast I like Wheaties, Total, or Special K.” (Use the last comma before the conjunction.)
- **Separate multiple modifiers.** “Here’s another big, fat, thorny controversy.”
- **Separate things that might be confusing.** “The kids said they wanted to eat Uncle Jack before they went to the movies.”  
Something tells me that Uncle Jack might appreciate a couple of commas: “The kids said they wanted to eat, Uncle Jack, before they went to the movies.”
- **Separate speaking from speakers.** “After that unpleasantness with the commas,” Aunt Tilly informed us, “even watching movies at home makes your Uncle Jack a little nervous.”
- **Separate bits of information to make it easier to read.**  
“7,000,000,000.” “Tuesday, July 24, 1942.” “Carrboro, N.C.”

# Essential Information

The most important stuff you need to know

## Paragraphs

A paragraph is not:

- five sentences.
- something that begins with a topic sentence.
- something that is only about one thing.
- paragraph is not something that is indented.
- something we begin teaching in 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade.
- something kids can get good at by writing them one at a time in paragraph writing exercises.

**A paragraph is a group of related ideas.**

Change paragraphs when you:

- change to a new group of related ideas.
- change speaker.

**Try to keep your paragraphs short,  
between three and seven sentences.**

# Essential Information

The most important stuff you need to know

## Capitalization

Technically, there are only four rules:

- Capitalize the first word of a sentence.
- Capitalize the word “I”.
- Capitalize names, places, and things that are one-of-kind.
- Capitalize first, last, and important words in titles.

Keep a running list of things that should be capitalized.

Use a reference book.

Advertising breaks all the rules.

## Dash

Here’s all you need to know about dashes:

- Use a dash—or better yet, a pair!—to emphasize part of a sentence.
- Use a dash to show an interruption:  
“Why have you been using so many dashes?”  
“But I—”  
“Never use a dash where a comma will do.”

A pair of dashes is the opposite of parentheses.

# Essential Information

The most important stuff you need to know

## Parentheses

Here's all you need to know about parentheses:

- Use parentheses (always in pairs) to de-emphasize part of a sentence.
- A parenthetical comment is often called an "aside" (as though the remark were made to the side).
- Parentheses can be used in the middle of a sentence (like this) or they can surround an entire sentence. (Here's a sentence surrounded by parentheses.) (Note that the period goes inside.)

Dashes emphasize, parentheses de-emphasize.

## Ellipsis

Here's all you need to know about the ellipsis:

- Use an ellipsis to show that something has been left out. "...something has been left out."
- Use an ellipsis to show that something repeats indefinitely. "something repeats... sometime repeats...." (The fourth dot is the period at the end of the sentence.)
- Use an ellipsis to show that time is passing.

# Essential Information

The most important stuff you need to know

## Colon

Here's all you need to know about colons:

- Use a colon to introduce a list: lions, tigers, and bears (oh my).
- Use a colon to introduce a quote: "Yikes, there's a colon!"
- Use a colon to show that one thing is the same as another thing. "There's no better way to describe a colon than this: it works like an equals sign."

## Semicolon

Here's all you need to know about the ellipsis:

- Use a semicolon between two closely related yet independent thoughts: "Nothing impresses an English teacher more than a well-placed semicolon; no other mark earns its user the same respect."

The thoughts expressed on either side of the semicolon must both be complete sentences.

You never ever need to use a semicolon. A period or a comma can always suffice.

# Essential Information

The most important stuff you need to know

## Apostrophe

Here's all you need to know about apostrophes:

- Use an apostrophe to take the place of missing letters in a contraction: "Do not leave the apostrophe out of don't."
- Use an apostrophe to show belonging: "Mike's money belongs to Mike."

## Hyphen

Here's all you need to know about the ellipsis:

- Use a hyphen to break a word at a syllable boundary at the end of a line.
- Use a hyphen to make one word out of two or more words: "That was an off-the-wall comment."

# Essential Information

The most important stuff you need to know

## Dialog

Here's all you need to know about apostrophes:

- Quotation and tag: The quotation is the words being spoken; the tag tells who spoke them.
- **Tag at the end:** "Punctuating dialog is tedious," said Mr. Peha.
- **Tag in the middle:** "Punctuating dialog is tedious," said Mr. Peha. "But I'll try my best to learn it."
- **Tag at the beginning.** Mr. Peha hung his head in despair. "This tag-at-the-beginning thing always confuses me!"
- Put quotes only around the words people are actually speaking.
- Put punctuation inside the quotes.
- Use only one mark of punctuation at the end of a quote.
- Start a new paragraph each time a new person speaks.



## Shared Editing Practice

chores chores chores chores are boring scrubbing toilets cleaning  
sinks and washing bathtubs take up a lot of my time and are not fun  
at all toilets when youre scrubbing toilets make sure theyre not  
stinky ive scrubbed one before and i was lucky it didn't stink i think  
toilets are one of the hardest things to scrub in the bathroom  
because its hard to get up around the rim sinks are one of the easiest  
things to clean in the bathroom because they have no rims and they  
are small i cleaned one before and it was pretty easy bathtubs ever  
washed one theyre big theyre deep and its hard to get up around the  
sides the bathtub is the hardest i think to wash in the bathroom  
chores are dull especially making my bed cleaning my room is ok  
because i like organizing dusting is the worst dust set down pick up  
dust set down there are so many things to dust and its no fun chores  
arent the worst but theyre definitely not the best

# Edit Passes

The best way to improve student editing

*Focus on one type of error at a time!*

Make passes in this order:

1. Words (left out, repeated, wrong, etc.)
2. Sentences
3. Paragraphs
4. Capitalization
5. Spelling

(You can go a long way in life with just these five!)

6. Commas
7. Dialog (if present)
8. Anything else

Read your piece expressively one time through.  
Conventions read your piece one time through.

# What is Good Reading?

Explicit Instruction  
Everyone Can Understand



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)

# What is Good Reading?

## Big ideas

1

**Garbage in, garbage out.** When kids read poorly, they understand poorly. When decoding and fluency are weak, text input to the brain is compromised. We have to make sure kids understand that the quality of what comes out is directly related to the quality of what goes in. Rereading to correct errors is an essential part of improving comprehension.

2

**We have to be as explicit about quality in reading as we are about quality in writing.** Reading is no different than anything else we want kids to master; they need a detailed understanding of what it is. Just as we use explicit criteria in writing, we need to use criteria for reading, too. Ideally, our criteria will cover all phases of the reading process and will apply to reading all types of texts.

3

**We must teach kids to self-assess.** We must express the criteria of good reading in simple language kids can understand and apply to their own work. Most reading takes place silently; only the reader can tell what's going on. The reader is also the only person who can make corrections and improvements. Teaching kids to assess their own reading should be our primary goal.

4

**Kids need lots of practice.** Not only are we asking kids to learn to read, we're asking them to monitor and improve their reading as well. This requires significant practice. The best practice readers can receive is time spent reading in texts they enjoy at their independent reading level. This is the key to help them learn what good reading is and what good readers do.

5

**Kids need read alouds, think alouds, and choral reading.** Kids need to hear what good reading sounds like. But that alone is not enough. When we model reading for kids, we need to connect the things we do with our criteria for reading quality. Kids need to see us thinking while we read. We also need to scaffold kids' oral reading fluency with choral reading.

6

**We have to acknowledge that understanding is the goal, not speed.** Many kids think they've finished reading something when they've run their eyes across the words. We have to refocus their effort on understanding, not speed. We can do this by making sure they're reading for a specific purpose and that they keep reading until the purpose is achieved.

# What is Good Reading?

## Criteria

### 1. Speed

- \_\_\_ Read at a comfortable talking speed.
- \_\_\_ Slow down when the text is hard.
- \_\_\_ Maintain a consistent reading rate.
- \_\_\_ Read slow enough to get all the words.
- \_\_\_ Read fast enough to understand what I'm reading.

### 2. Accuracy

- \_\_\_ Read words easily and automatically.
- \_\_\_ Pronounce words clearly as they are written.
- \_\_\_ Break hard words into easier pieces.
- \_\_\_ Correct words I miss and reread from the beginning of the sentence.
- \_\_\_ Practice hard words until I get them right.

### 3. Phrasing

- \_\_\_ Split sentences into smaller groups of words.
- \_\_\_ Group words together by grammar.
- \_\_\_ Put a little extra space between groups of words.
- \_\_\_ Tuck the little words into the big words.
- \_\_\_ Keep phrases shorter the harder the text is.

### 4. Expression

- \_\_\_ Read with feeling; make my voice match the meaning.
- \_\_\_ Change my volume, rhythm, pitch, and timbre in ways that make sense.
- \_\_\_ Follow the punctuation.
- \_\_\_ Make it sound like someone is reading to me.
- \_\_\_ Emphasize important moments.

### 5. Understanding

- \_\_\_ Know what the words mean in context.
- \_\_\_ Follow events in a story.
- \_\_\_ Follow the writer's ideas.
- \_\_\_ Reread when something doesn't make sense.
- \_\_\_ Summarize what I have read.

### 6. Thinking

- \_\_\_ Ask questions.
- \_\_\_ Make connections.
- \_\_\_ Make inferences and predictions.
- \_\_\_ Determine what's important.
- \_\_\_ Appreciate the quality of the writing.

# What is Good Reading?

## Speed

### Criteria for Speed

Read at a comfortable talking speed.

Slow down when the text is hard.

Maintain a consistent reading rate.

Read slow enough to get all the words.

Read fast enough to understand what I'm reading.

### Problems with Speed

Kids read way too fast.

Kids don't maintain a consistent speed.

Kids don't slow down when the text is hard.

Kids read easy words so fast  
they don't have time to deal with hard words.

# What is Good Reading?

## What's your reading rate?

Eddie had always been able to fly, but it wasn't until his fifth birthday party that he realized that it would turn out to be a bit of a social problem. Until that embarrassing day on the Johnsons' lawn, Eddie's parents had treated his airborne peculiarity as something of a childish whim. "Boy's gotta stretch out, learn what he can do," said his father. "I just worry that he'll hurt himself, you know, bump into the ceiling or get his eye poked out by a bird, I don't know..." said his mother. For the young Eddie, flying was just another discovery about his developing body, like learning that he could reach out his arm and ring the bell on his cradle railing, or finding that he loved the taste of peas. The first time his parents came into the nursery and found Eddie hovering a foot or two off the floor it came as a bit of a shock. But, after all, parents are forever discovering special little things about their children. Eddie's mother thought that perhaps they should take their son to see a specialist, but his father vetoed the idea. "It's not like anything's wrong with him, and I don't want him getting a complex about it."

[209]

In fact, Eddie's flying soon became an annoyance to his parents. Broken light fixtures, crayon marks on the ceilings, and lost objects that had to be retrieved from the tops of bookcases soon exasperated them. Once when Eddie was three, his rather senile grandmother came for a visit. As she was sitting in her favorite armchair watching TV, Eddie, who had been playing behind the chair, appeared in the air over his grandmother, ready to drop a rubber ball on her graying, addled head. His father shot him a look so full of "No!" that Eddie desisted at once and sulkily spent the rest of the day firmly seated on the carpet. As the months and years passed, Eddie learned to be reticent about his ability in order to avoid parental displeasure; this had the added benefit of not provoking awkward questions from grandparents and visiting relatives. Eddie's mother and father also took certain prudent precautions such as a gentle restraining hand during diaper changing and remembering to close the sun roof of the family car when Eddie was inside.

[389]

And then, shortly before his fifth birthday, Eddie's mother received a phone call from her neighbor three houses down. Mrs. Johnson was offering to throw a little birthday bash for Eddie's fifth with some of the neighborhood kids. Eddie's mother eagerly accepted, and the two agreed how wonderful it would be for Eddie and the Johnsons' five-year-old, Alex, to make friends. Eddie's mother was secretly pleased at the invitation for another reason: Mr. Johnson was on the community council, and the Johnsons lived in the biggest, nicest house in the cul-de-sac. This might be a great social opportunity for the parents as well as the children.

[495]

On the big day, Mrs. Johnson met Eddie and his mother at the Johnsons' front door and showed them to the back yard after a brief tour of the house. Eddie and Alex, after some preliminary shyness, got down to the serious business of playing with a set of toy trucks, and eventually seven other youngsters arrived, escorted by various parents and babysitters. Eddie was treated to a large assortment of presents and Mrs. Johnson's cake proved popular with both children and adults.

[578]

# What is Good Reading?

## What's your reading rate?

Positing a strong cognitive perspective, bottom-up text processing models are data-driven, emphasize lower-level processes such as letter and word recognition, and most importantly, emphasize textual decoding due to the primary priority placed upon the text as input. In contrast, top-down models place primary emphasis on prior knowledge which the reader brings into the process of reading to render an interpretation. Unlike bottom-up models that start out with letter and word recognition, top-down models are content-driven and hypothesize the “sampling” of text, into which inferences are made via the help of the reader’s prior syntactic and semantic knowledge. [97]

Instead of positing a sequential processing mode, interactive approaches to reading recognize the simultaneous interaction of both lower-level processing skills (identification and decoding) and higher-level reasoning and comprehension skills (inferencing and interpretation). As Grabe asserts, “reading involves an array of lower-level rapid, automatic identification skills and an array of higher-level comprehension/interpretation skills.” The concept of interaction is based on the assumption that there is a complex cognitive psychological relationship between reader and text, and a simultaneous activation of readers’ multiple component skills and their background world knowledge as they attempt to (re)construct the information present or implied in the text. [197]

Two examples of interactive processing models are those theorized by Stanovich and Swaffar et al. Stanovich claims that the development of reading fluency needs to be viewed as an “interactive-compensatory” model of individual differences wherein readers compensate for deficiencies at the word level (lower level) by relying more on context (higher level). In a similar vein, Swaffar et al assess readers based on their affective factors such as motivation and different learning styles, their background world knowledge, and their linguistic knowledge. Their integrated approach to language learning is founded on the belief that readers engage in reading for meaning. [296]

One interactive approach that enjoyed particular popularity was the Constructivist Model advanced by Bernhardt. This model, influenced greatly by K. Goodman’s and Coady’s psycholinguistic model, includes the following six elements: prior knowledge, word recognition, phonemic/graphemic features, meta-cognition, syntactic feature recognition, and intratextual perceptions (i.e., “how the reader perceives and then reconciles each part of the text with the preceding and succeeding discourse context”). The end result of these interacting factors is comprehension. [368]

An important contribution of this model is the notion that reading involves readers, not just the reading text. That the reading process comprises the interaction of reader and text is in fact the central tenet of this approach. Another important contribution of this model is the keen observation that comprehension of a reading passage may be impeded when that passage contains unfamiliar referents. Despite the grounding of this model in empirical studies, however, it does not account for affective factors such as anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation, even though their pertinent role in reading has long been acknowledged to have an effect on meta-cognition and text comprehension. [474]

In sum, it can be argued quite convincingly that positing a solely bottom-up or top-down processing model for reading will fail to capture the complex interactive nature of the reading process. Alternatively, an interactive approach to reading appears to offer a better explanation of the cognitive processes believed to be at work here. Yet notwithstanding this model’s improved explanatory power, it is unclear how the interactive, or indeed any of these processing models, can be translated into effective, simple-to-use teaching practices with long-lasting results. [558]



# What is Good Reading?

## Accuracy

### Criteria for Accuracy

Read words easily and automatically.

Pronounce words clearly as they are written.

Break hard words into easier pieces.

Correct words I miss and reread from the beginning of the sentence.

Practice hard words until I get them right.

### Problems with Accuracy

Kids skip over hard words.

Kids stumble on hard words and don't self-correct.

Kids mispronounce words.

Kids substitute words that change the meaning.

# What is Good Reading?

## Phrasing

### Criteria for Phrasing

Split sentences into smaller groups of words.

Group words together by grammar.

Put a little extra space between groups of words.

Tuck the little words into the big words.

Keep phrases shorter the harder the text is.

### Problems with Phrasing

Kids read word-by-word.

Kids break phrases at odd boundaries.

Kids read so fast their phrasing isn't audible.

# Phrase Breaking™

**1. Phrasing is a natural activity all readers understand.** Most readers don't think about phrasing. But they know it by heart:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of  
the United States of America and  
to the Republic for which it  
stands, one Nation under God, in-  
divisible, with liberty and justice  
for all.

I pledge allegiance  
to the flag  
of the United States of America  
and to the Republic  
for which it stands,  
etc...

**2. Phrasing breaks language into meaningful parts.** In the phrased version of *The Pledge of Allegiance*, each line makes sense by itself. Language works in phrases. And reading works best when we can see them easily.

**3. Phrases follow predictable patterns.** In general, phrases:

- Start with little words and end with big ones.
- Are 3-6 words long, occasionally one or two, very rarely 7 or more.
- Follow the grammar of the sentence and are read as a unit.
- Are separated from each other by a tiny "space", but not a pause.

**4. Phrasing makes hard texts easier.** Phrasing is helpful all the time. But it's especially important to concentrate on when:

- **You're having trouble decoding.** Stumbling on words makes ideas hard to understand.
- **You're faced with long sentences.** Big ideas are easier to understand in small parts.
- **You need more comprehension.** Careful phrasing is a great way to pick up small details.
- **You're having trouble with new vocabulary.** Phrasing helps you discover what a word means in relation to others. It also gives you clues as to how a word functions as a part of speech.
- **You're reading above your level.** When you're struggling, phrasing helps you read more accurately and more fluently.

# What is Good Reading?

## Expression

### Criteria for Expression

Read with feeling; make my voice match the meaning.

Change my volume, rhythm, pitch, and timbre in ways that make sense.

Follow the punctuation.

Make it sound like someone is reading to me.

Emphasize important moments.

### Problems with Expression

Kids don't have any; reading is monotone.

Kids read too fast to express.

Kids ignore punctuation.

No change in pitch around sentence boundaries.

Not distinguishing character from narrator,  
or multiple speakers from each other, in dialog.

# Expressive Reading

**1. Make your voice match the meaning.** Instead of reading like a robot, change your voice to match the meaning of what you read:

- **Change pitch.** Making your voice go up and down as you follow a sentence or switch characters helps you understand where ideas begin and end.
- **Change volume.** Saying some words louder and longer than others creates emphasis and helps you know what's important.
- **Change rhythm.** Stopping and starting, speeding up and slowing down help readers see how small parts of sentences combine to create complete thoughts.
- **Change tone.** Sometimes, readers use a soft, warm voice; sometimes their voice is cold and hard. Tone communicates feeling.

**2. Expressive readers use techniques that match the way we speak.**

The following strategies will make your reading sound more like talking:

- **Go slow.** To increase expression, decrease speed; extra expression takes extra time.
- **Repeat till it's complete.** If you mess up, repeat the sentence from the beginning.
- **Sentence high and low.** Start high, then lower the pitch slightly as you near the end.
- **Sentence fast and slow.** Start quick, then slow down slightly as you near the end.
- **Up at the end for a question.** The pitch of your voice springs up at the finish.
- **Straight up for an exclamation.** Increase both pitch and volume for an exclamation.
- **Stop at a period, pause at a comma.** Pause at colons, semicolons, and dashes, too.
- **Character high, narrator low.** Higher pitch for spoken words; lower for attributions.
- **Emphasize important words.** Call attention to a word or phrase with pitch, volume, tone, or timbre.
- **Once more with feeling.** Match your emotions to the meaning of the words.

**3. Expression works even when you read silently.** Listen to the voice inside your head as you read. You can still hear changes in expression. Pay attention to the "sound" of silent reading. It will help you improve.

# What is Good Reading?

## Expression

Eddie had always been able to fly, but it wasn't until his fifth birthday party that he realized that it would turn out to be a bit of a social problem. Until that embarrassing day on the Johnsons' lawn, Eddie's parents had treated his airborne peculiarity as something of a childish whim. "Boy's gotta stretch out, learn what he can do," said his father. "I just worry that he'll hurt himself, you know, bump into the ceiling or get his eye poked out by a bird, I don't know..." said his mother. For the young Eddie, flying was just another discovery about his developing body, like learning that he could reach out his arm and ring the bell on his cradle railing, or finding that he loved the taste of peas. The first time his parents came into the nursery and found Eddie hovering a foot or two off the floor it came as a bit of a shock. But, after all, parents are forever discovering special little things about their children. Eddie's mother thought that perhaps they should take their son to see a specialist, but his father vetoed the idea. "It's not like anything's wrong with him, and I don't want him getting a complex about it."

# What is Good Reading?

## Understanding

### Criteria for Understanding

Know what the words mean in context.

Follow events in a story.

Follow the writer's ideas.

Reread when something doesn't make sense.

Summarize what I have read.

### Problems with Understanding

Kids skip words they don't know.

Kids read faster than they can process the details of the text.

Kids don't connect details to ideas.

Kids don't reread when they need to.

# What is Good Reading?

## Thinking

### Criteria for Thinking

Ask questions.

Make connections.

Make inferences and predictions.

Determine what's important.

Appreciate the quality of the writing.

### Problems with Thinking

Kids don't think about what they read.

Every bit of information is important as every other bit of information.

Kids don't make inferences.

Kids confuse connections with what is actually part of the text.

Kids don't notice the quality of the writing.



# Questions

## The best place to start

It was a pleasure to burn.

It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed. With the brass nozzle in his fists, with this great python spitting its venomous kerosene upon the world, the blood pounded in his head, and his hands were the hands of some amazing conductor playing all the symphonies of blazing and burning to bring down the tatters and charcoal ruins of history. With his symbolic helmet numbered 451 on his stolid head, and his eyes all orange flame with the thought that came next, he flicked the igniter and the house jumped up in a gorging fire that burned the evening sky red and yellow and black. He strode in a swarm of fireflies. He wanted above all, like the old joke, to shove a marshmallow on a stick in a furnace, while the flapping pigeon-winged books died on the porch and lawn of the house. While the books went up in sparkling whirls and blew away on a wind turned dark with burning.

---

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. In the first place, that stuff bores me, and in the second place, my parents would have about two hemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty personal about them. They're quite touchy about anything like that, especially my father. They're nice and all—I'm not saying that—but they're also touchy as hell. Besides, I'm just not going to tell you my whole autobiography or anything. I'll just tell you about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty run-down and had to come out here and take it easy.

# Connections

## Improve memory and build background knowledge

The week before they were ripe, my grandmother would cover them in cheesecloth like some arboreal ghost. And, then, in those final days, she would have me sit sentinel in a yard chair with a broom to keep the birds away. I'll never forget the smell of those leaves in the hot August sun or the giant bees that appeared out of nowhere, circling my charge. I would pretend that the bees were baseballs and hit them against the wall of my grandfather's shop with the broom. Figs. Southern brown turkey figs—summer's last fruit. For my grandmother, they were the fine china and crystal of the southern garden—you didn't just trot them out for anyone. But, alas, they were lost on my 9 year old palate.

---

By October 19, U-2 flights showed four sites operational. At this time, three options were considered: air strikes, invasion, and blockade. Memories of *The Bay of Pigs* dampened enthusiasm for sending in troops. And when further assessments suggested that air strikes could result in 10-20 thousand casualties, and another U-2 flight discovered bombers and cruise missiles along the northern shore, a decision was made to put a blockade into effect. A strong but limited action that sent a clear message and left options open if escalation was called for, a blockade was technically an act of war, so the term "quarantine" was used.

# Inferences

## Discover additional information

### Hide & Seek

At last he would really show them. He'd picked the very best place to hide. They'd all say he could play the game better than anyone. When they found him, they'd clap their hands.

The dopes. How dumb can they get? They should have looked here first! It's so obvious!

Here in the abandoned refrigerator.

---

### Untitled

Muscles rippled under the blue-green scales as the dragon stretched, then relaxed.

Fascinated, I watched the creature freeze to perfect immobility. I stared until the man noticed me. With a glare, he rolled down his sleeve.

"Nice tattoo," I said, embarrassed.

"What tattoo?" he asked, turning away.

Under his sleeve, I saw something move.

---

### Solitaire

Encased by the laundry room walls, she stuffed load after load into the insatiable washer, begrudging every minute lost. Sodden diaper, mismatched booties, Batman pajamas, pink leotards, grass-stained soccer shirts, knee-socks, pinafores, jeans, sweaters, skirts, trousers.

Now, finally, she washes one small load a week, and wonders why the days are so long.

# Fiction vs Non-Fiction

## What we need to tell our students

### Reading for Pleasure

1. Choice of text
2. Choice of subject matter
3. Experience with author/genre/series
4. Choice of reading level
5. Many texts to choose from
6. High interest
7. High subject matter familiarity
8. Prior knowledge not a significant factor
9. Required knowledge not highly cumulative
10. Read for emotional experience
11. Long texts read over many sittings
12. Memory of whole text not essential
13. Read for the gist
14. Multiple interpretations valued
15. Different texts highly independent
16. Everyday vocabulary
17. Predictable organization
18. Always read from beginning to end
19. Always read in full
20. Based on characters and concrete actions

### Reading for Information

1. Limited or no choice
2. Subject matter already chosen
3. No experience
4. Reading level often too high
5. Few texts to choose from
6. Often low or no interest
7. Low or no familiarity with subject matter
8. Prior knowledge most significant factor
9. Required knowledge highly cumulative
10. Read to solve a problem or perform a task
11. Short texts in single sittings
12. Memory of whole text often essential
13. Read to find specific information
14. Single interpretation required
15. Different texts may be totally dependent
16. Specialized and often unfamiliar vocabulary
17. Unpredictable organization
18. Often read out of order
19. Often read selectively
20. Based on abstract concepts and logic

# Comprehensive Comprehension

Read Like a Reader,  
Read Like a Writer



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)

# Comprehensive Comprehension

Read like a reader, read like a writer

## Reading Like a Reader

We might think of this as the “normal” way of reading where we try to figure out what a piece of writing means by understanding the words a writer is using. But even this “normal” way is more complicated than it seems.

**1. Question**

**4. Predict**

**2. Connect**

**5. Feel**

**3. Infer**

**6. Evaluate**

## Reading Like a Reader

When we read from the perspective of a writer, we focus less on *what* the writer is trying to say and more on *how* the writer is saying it. Specifically, we look at the techniques the writer is using to get his or her message across and how those techniques affect us as we experience the text.

**1. Ideas**

**4. Word Choice**

**2. Organization**

**5. Sentence Fluency**

**3. Voice**

**6. Conventions**

# Comprehensive Comprehension

## Read like a reader

### Reading Like a Reader

There's no way to know for sure what goes on in a reader's head. And every reader probably reads a little differently. But here's a list of six things all readers do, things that make them more successful, and make reading more fun. We call this "reading like a reader".

#### 1. Question

Readers ask good questions about the things they read. What kinds of questions do they ask? Just about anything that comes to mind: why something is happening or not happening, why a character feels or acts a certain way, things we wonder about or are confused by, words we may not know the meanings of, and so on. Questions help readers clarify their understanding.

#### 2. Predict

Readers make guesses about what is coming up next. No reader, it seems, can resist thinking about what a writer is going to say next. It's just part of human nature to anticipate things. Predicting helps readers sort out important information from unimportant information, it helps them organize their thinking as they encounter new material.

#### 3. Infer

Readers figure out things about what they read that aren't actually written in the text. There's almost always more to a story than just the words on the page. Often, writers leave "clues" that good readers can use to discover important information.

#### 4. Connect

Readers think about what their reading reminds them of. We can't help but be reminded of our own lives as we read. We're also reminded of similar things we've read in other texts and other parts of the same text we're reading at the time.

#### 5. Feel

Readers experience emotions while they read. Sometimes, it seems like we have a direct connection to what we're reading: sad parts make us sad, happy parts make us happy, scary parts scare us, and so on. But often, the feelings we have are more subtle, we may feel them only slightly, for example, when we read with more expression. Much of the meaning we get from writing comes from what we feel when we read it.

#### 6. Evaluate

Readers make judgments while they read. Is this good? If so, what's good about it? Do I like it? Why? Should I keep reading or should I put this down and get something else? Readers are finicky, impatient, judgmental. The evaluations they make help them decide whether or not what they are reading is valuable and, if so, how they might use it.

# Comprehensive Comprehension

## Read like a reader: fiction

Eddie had always been able to fly, but it wasn't until his fifth birthday party that he realized that it would turn out to be a bit of a social problem. Until that embarrassing day on the Johnsons' lawn, Eddie's parents had treated his airborne peculiarity as something of a childish whim. "Boy's gotta stretch out, learn what he can do," said his father. "I just worry that he'll hurt himself, you know, bump into the ceiling or get his eye poked out by a bird, I don't know..." said his mother. For the young Eddie, flying was just another discovery about his developing body, like learning that he could reach out his arm and ring the bell on his cradle railing, or finding that he loved the taste of peas. The first time his parents came into the nursery and found Eddie hovering a foot or two off the floor it came as a bit of a shock. But, after all, parents are forever discovering special little things about their children. Eddie's mother thought that perhaps they should take their son to see a specialist, but his father vetoed the idea. "It's not like anything's wrong with him, and I don't want him getting a complex about it."

---

### 1. Question

Is this a fantasy story where people have special powers? Or is the author using the idea of flying to stand for something else? If he can really fly, why aren't his parents a little more freaked out about it?

### 2. Predict

I think Eddie's flying is going to get him in trouble. In the very first sentence, the author refers to Eddie's flying as "a bit of a social problem" and to me that hints that things can only get worse.

### 3. Infer

Eddie's parents seem strange. They don't sound like real people, more like characters from a bad TV show. I think the author is trying to tell us that they may not be very smart or very sensitive.

### 4. Connect

This reminds me of Harry Potter where a boy has special powers. But it also makes me think of other kids I have seen who may be different. Sometimes, kids with unusual abilities aren't accepted by other people.

### 5. Feel

I feel sorry for Eddie. I get the feeling that he's going to be lonely because people aren't going to understand him.

### 6. Evaluate

I think the beginning is good. The author has an entertaining and funny style. I especially like the way he describes Eddie's parents though I don't like them at all, especially Eddie's father. This is exactly the kind of story I like: realistic but with a little bit of a twist.



# Comprehensive Comprehension

## Read like a writer

### Reading Like a Writer

Normally, when we read, we focus on *what* the writer is trying to say. When we read like a writer, however, we focus on *how* the writer is saying it. We pay close attention to the techniques a writer is using and how those techniques contribute to the meaning of the piece and improve its quality. We may even borrow the techniques we learn for our own writing.

#### 1. Ideas

Ideas are the heart of the piece, what the writer is writing about and the information her or she chooses to reveal about it. When we read like a writer, we try to answer questions like these:

How does the writer reveal the main idea?  
What types of details does the writer use? How does the writer achieve his or her purpose?

#### 2. Organization

Organization refers to the order of ideas and the way the writer moves from one idea to the next. When we read like a writer, we try to answer questions like these: What kinds of leads and endings does the writer use? How does the writer handle transitions? What techniques does the writer use for sequencing? How does the writer control pacing?

#### 3. Voice

Voice is how the writing feels to someone when they read it, it's the expression of the writer's individual personality through words. When we read like a writer, we try to answer questions like these: How does the writer demonstrate passion for the topic? How does the writer reveal emotions? How does the writer put personality into the piece?

#### 4. Word Choice

Word Choice refers to writer's selection of particular words and phrases to express ideas. When we read like a writer, we try to answer questions like these: What techniques (simile, metaphor, strong verbs, etc.) does the writer use to make the word choice more specific, more memorable, and more effective?

#### 5. Sentence Fluency

Sentence Fluency is the rhythm and flow of the language as we read it. When we read like a writer, we try to answer questions like these: What kinds of sentence constructions does the writer use? How does the writer vary the length and construction of his or her sentences? How does the writer use "sound" effects like alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm?

#### 6. Conventions

Conventions are the ways we use punctuation, spelling, grammar, and other things that make writing consistent and easy to read. When we read like a writer, we try to answer questions like these: How does the writer use conventions to make the writing easy to read and more meaningful? Does the author use conventions in unusual ways that are successful?

# Comprehensive Comprehension

## Read like a writer: fiction

Eddie had always been able to fly, but it wasn't until his fifth birthday party that he realized that it would turn out to be a bit of a social problem. Until that embarrassing day on the Johnsons' lawn, Eddie's parents had treated his airborne peculiarity as something of a childish whim. "Boy's gotta stretch out, learn what he can do," said his father. "I just worry that he'll hurt himself, you know, bump into the ceiling or get his eye poked out by a bird, I don't know..." said his mother. For the young Eddie, flying was just another discovery about his developing body, like learning that he could reach out his arm and ring the bell on his cradle railing, or finding that he loved the taste of peas. The first time his parents came into the nursery and found Eddie hovering a foot or two off the floor it came as a bit of a shock. But, after all, parents are forever discovering special little things about their children. Eddie's mother thought that perhaps they should take their son to see a specialist, but his father vetoed the idea. "It's not like anything's wrong with him, and I don't want him getting a complex about it."

---

### 1. Ideas

A flying baby boy, in the context of what appears to be a realistic setting, is a curious and compelling idea.

### 2. Organization

The opening line is great. It certainly gets our attention and makes us want to find out more. The author has us wondering about three things: Eddie's flying ability, his parents strange reaction, and the embarrassing incident on his fifth birthday.

### 3. Voice

The author's voice is light-hearted and playful, just as one might imagine a flying baby boy to be. There's a calmness to the writing that makes it seem like everything is normal even though Eddie is not.

### 4. Word Choice

The phrase "airborne peculiarity" seems like the perfect way to describe Eddie's unique talent as viewed by his parents. In the last sentence, the strong verb "vetoed" tells us that Eddie's dad is like the "president" of the family; any time he wants he can cancel his wife's ideas.

### 5. Sentence Fluency

The writer uses many long sentences but punctuates them so they're easy to read and understand.

### 6. Conventions

Normally, when quoting characters in a story, we start a new paragraph for each new speaker. Here the author quotes the parents inside a paragraph. The use of the ellipsis at the end of the mother's comment makes her seem even more vague than her clichéd words imply.

# Comprehensive Comprehension

## Read like a reader: non-fiction

As a student at Jefferson Davis High here, Rosa Arevelo seemed the “Texas miracle” in motion. After years of classroom drills, she passed the high school exam required for graduation on her first try. A program of college prep courses earned her the designation “Texas scholar.”

At the University of Houston, though, Ms. Arevelo discovered the distance between what Texas public schools called success and what she needed to know. Trained to write five-paragraph “persuasive essays” for the state exam, she was stumped by her first writing assignment. She failed the college entrance exam in math twice, even with a year of remedial algebra. At 19, she gave up and went to trade school.

“I had good grades in high school, so I thought I could do well in college,” Ms. Arevelo said. “I thought I was getting a good education.”

In recent years, Texas has trumpeted the academic gains of Ms. Arevelo and millions more students largely on the basis of a state test, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, or TAAS.

As a presidential candidate, Texas’s former governor, George W. Bush, contended that Texas’s methods of holding schools responsible for student performance had brought huge improvements in passing rates and remarkable strides in eliminating the gap between white and minority children.

The claims catapulted Houston’s superintendent, Rod Paige, to Washington as education secretary and made Texas a model for the country. The education law signed by President Bush in January 2002, No Child Left Behind, gives public schools 12 years to match Houston’s success and bring virtually all children to academic proficiency.

But an examination of the performance of students in Houston by The New York Times raises serious doubts about the magnitude of those gains. Scores on a national exam that Houston students took alongside the Texas exam from 1999 to 2002 showed much smaller gains and falling scores in high school reading.

---

### 1. Question

How does the Texas test compare to other state tests in terms of how hard it is? How do states decide how hard to make their tests?

### 2. Predict

Texas will be shown to have one of the easiest tests in the country.

### 3. Infer

Many articles are coming out now talking about how states are making their tests easier so more kids will pass.

### 4. Connect

George Bush and Rod Paige benefited from all the talk about improvements in Texas schools. But those improvements weren’t real.

### 5. Feel

I’m angry. I don’t think the kids in Texas are getting a fair deal. They think they’re getting a good education, but they’re not.

### 6. Evaluate

This is a good article on an important topic. The writer has done a good job of backing up his ideas with examples.

# Comprehensive Comprehension

## Read like a writer: non-fiction

As a student at Jefferson Davis High here, Rosa Arevelo seemed the “Texas miracle” in motion. After years of classroom drills, she passed the high school exam required for graduation on her first try. A program of college prep courses earned her the designation “Texas scholar.”

At the University of Houston, though, Ms. Arevelo discovered the distance between what Texas public schools called success and what she needed to know. Trained to write five-paragraph “persuasive essays” for the state exam, she was stumped by her first writing assignment. She failed the college entrance exam in math twice, even with a year of remedial algebra. At 19, she gave up and went to trade school.

“I had good grades in high school, so I thought I could do well in college,” Ms. Arevelo said. “I thought I was getting a good education.”

In recent years, Texas has trumpeted the academic gains of Ms. Arevelo and millions more students largely on the basis of a state test, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, or TAAS.

As a presidential candidate, Texas’s former governor, George W. Bush, contended that Texas’s methods of holding schools responsible for student performance had brought huge improvements in passing rates and remarkable strides in eliminating the gap between white and minority children.

The claims catapulted Houston’s superintendent, Rod Paige, to Washington as education secretary and made Texas a model for the country. The education law signed by President Bush in January 2002, No Child Left Behind, gives public schools 12 years to match Houston’s success and bring virtually all children to academic proficiency.

But an examination of the performance of students in Houston by The New York Times raises serious doubts about the magnitude of those gains. Scores on a national exam that Houston students took alongside the Texas exam from 1999 to 2002 showed much smaller gains and falling scores in high school reading.

---

### 1. Ideas

Saying that the five-paragraph essay is the problem is a great detail because everyone can relate to it.

### 2. Organization

Starting with a story about a girl who is an example of the main idea is a good technique because it draws us into her story and makes us care.

### 3. Voice

The writer mixes the objective voice of a news story with the more personal voice of feature writing.

### 4. Word Choice

The phrase “After years of classroom drills” and the writer’s choice to put “Texas scholar” and “persuasive essays” in quotation marks tells us these things aren’t real.

### 5. Sentence Fluency

I like the alliteration in phrases like “Texas miracle in motion” and “discovered the distance.”

### 6. Conventions

In the headline, the use of the semicolon in the same phrase with a colon is very unusual.

# Comprehensive Comprehension

## Read like a reader: fiction

Ola Mae had a death grip on the broom handle as she swept the porch. She pretended it was Rupert's neck and she enjoyed that. If it was really Rupert's neck, she'd feel his throat strainin against the pressure. Her Daddy'd told her that, the time he'd nigh bout strangled her Mama in a drunken rage.

"Thank God yo Uncle Elijah came when he did," her Daddy'd said. "Or yo Mama'd be dead."

Ola Mae sighed, sweepin a bunch'a dead mud daubers from underneath the glider. She hated those things. But not as much as she hated cave crickets. Or at this moment, Rupert.

Damn fool husband went on down to the fish camp with all their money in a coffee can and lost it in four hands. All that money swept away just like the dried leaves and dead bugs and dirt she was sweepin from that porch.

She'd used this old broom so much there were grooves in it; fit her hands only now. She wondered if the grooves of Rupert's throat would feel that way, and squeezed a little harder to imagine. She thought hard bout finishin him off as she swat-

ted a wasp's nest from the corner over the glider.

Ola Mae raised the broom to the shutters. Cobwebs and sweat bees. Soon Mr. Richard would be home for his dinner and nap. He'd probably want to set a spell out here before goin back to the courthouse.

Make it nice for Mr. Richard. Maybe then he won't mind she ask him for an advance. A little sumpum to keep food on the table for her younguns.

She could just kill Rupert but then what would she do, alone with three kids who'd lost their Daddy to her hand; and likely herself, too. She reckoned a jury'a her peers (specially if they let a few married ladies on it) would understand why she wrapped her fingers so hard round his neck till the very life squeezed outta him.

No, she wouldn't kill Rupert. He was a good man; little foolish sometimes. No. She'd strangle this here broomstick instead, sweep away the mess'a other people's lives, then ask Mr. Richard for some help in sweepin up her own.

---

**Read Like a Reader:** 1. Question 2. Predict 3. Infer 4. Connect 5. Feel 6. Evaluate

# Comprehensive Comprehension

## Read like a writer: fiction

Ola Mae had a death grip on the broom handle as she swept the porch. She pretended it was Rupert's neck and she enjoyed that. If it was really Rupert's neck, she'd feel his throat strainin against the pressure. Her Daddy'd told her that, the time he'd nigh bout strangled her Mama in a drunken rage.

"Thank God yo Uncle Elijah came when he did," her Daddy'd said. "Or yo Mama'd be dead."

Ola Mae sighed, sweepin a bunch'a dead mud daubers from underneath the glider. She hated those things. But not as much as she hated cave crickets. Or at this moment, Rupert.

Damn fool husband went on down to the fish camp with all their money in a coffee can and lost it in four hands. All that money swept away just like the dried leaves and dead bugs and dirt she was sweepin from that porch.

She'd used this old broom so much there were grooves in it; fit her hands only now. She wondered if the grooves of Rupert's throat would feel that way, and squeezed a little harder to imagine. She thought hard bout finishin him off as she swat-

ted a wasp's nest from the corner over the glider.

Ola Mae raised the broom to the shutters. Cobwebs and sweat bees. Soon Mr. Richard would be home for his dinner and nap. He'd probably want to set a spell out here before goin back to the courthouse.

Make it nice for Mr. Richard. Maybe then he won't mind she ask him for an advance. A little sumpum to keep food on the table for her younguns.

She could just kill Rupert but then what would she do, alone with three kids who'd lost their Daddy to her hand; and likely herself, too. She reckoned a jury'a her peers (specially if they let a few married ladies on it) would understand why she wrapped her fingers so hard round his neck till the very life squeezed outta him.

No, she wouldn't kill Rupert. He was a good man; little foolish sometimes. No. She'd strangle this here broomstick instead, sweep away the mess'a other people's lives, then ask Mr. Richard for some help in sweepin up her own.

---

**Read Like a Writer: 1. Ideas 2. Organization 3. Voice 4. Word Choice 5. Sentence Fluency 6. Conventions**

# Close Reading

When Every Word Counts



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)



# Close Reading

## When every word counts

*How can she feel both ways at the same time? Why is she confused?*

*On what?*

*Really sad. Why?*

*Really happy.*

When she saw her score, she became depressed. Or was she elated? After all,

*What strategy?*

*So why isn't she happy?*

*Better than anyone thought.*

her strategy had been successful. But this was beyond expectations. People

*They'd think she did something wrong.*

*They wouldn't know for sure.*

would be suspicious. There would only be rumors at first, just speculation. She

*Why does she do this? Is she nervous?*

*She put something on her arm.*

rubbed the inside of her forearm. Hadn't even bothered to wash it off yet. And

*Prize.*

*Special object.*

*Solve like a puzzle.*

if she chose to keep it always as a trophy or a talisman, could anyone decipher

*She put the answers to a test on her arm.*

*It looked like a fancy design or a tattoo.*

the code? A present from her parents, she had told everyone; an easy way to

*Hide her secret plan to cheat on the test.*

*She got a perfect score on the test.*

obscure her ruse. But now, with perfection staring back at her from the page,

*Realized.*

*Quickly so no one would notice.*

she surmised that her plan had worked too well. She cast a furtive glance

*To see what other people got.*

around the room to spy on the scores of others. The difference would be

*Her score was way higher than the others.*

*Like she was afraid.*

*Pretended she was sick.*

telling. She timidly approached the teacher's desk, feigned illness, and dashed

*She's not sick so she must be hurrying to wash off the test answers.*

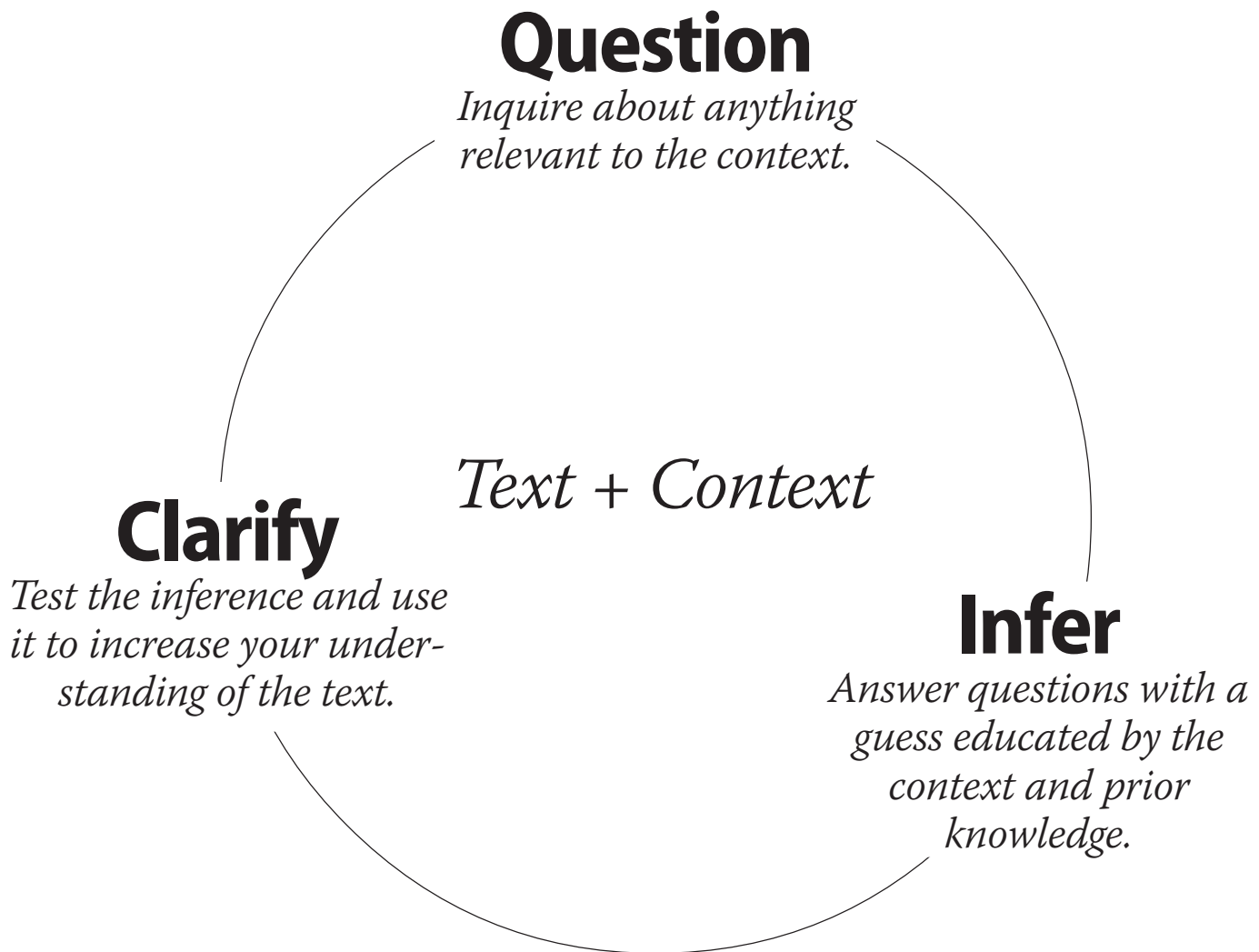
to the bathroom.



# Question-Infer-Clarify

## The comprehension cycle

*The cycle starts when the reader experiences an interruption in understanding.*



*The cycle ends as soon as the reader understands.*

# Question

**1. The best way to find answers is to ask questions.** To figure out something about a text, pose a question and go looking for the answer.

On a dark January night, a stout man with a black bag limps down a narrow path into a wrap of fog. Unusual as it is, this nocturnal stroll is anything but unusual for Mr. Bostwick; his work brings him to many locations around this tiny town, and almost always at odd hours. Night is normal for Mr. B; in fact, many in his occupation find daylight distracting—too much human contact.

- **Question:** What is Mr. Bostwick on his way to do?
- **Question:** What's in the bag? Is he a doctor?
- **Question:** Why does he mostly work at night?
- **Question:** Is he doing something that might get him in trouble?

Asking questions helps you find answers as you move further into the text. The trick is to focus on the best questions so you can find the best answers.

**2. Fat questions are usually more interesting than skinny ones.** Asking questions from different angles inspires interesting insights.

When the “Big Three” met at Yalta to carve up Europe in the aftermath of World War II, the deck was stacked in Russia’s favor. Roosevelt was weak and tired, his health was failing. He would die in two months. Churchill was stubborn and defiant but eventually gave in. In contrast, Stalin was strong and energetic. He knew he could drive a hard bargain and win.

- **Skinny Questions:** Who won World War II? What did the leaders talk about? When did Roosevelt die? Where is Yalta?
- **Fat Questions:** How did the physical and emotional health of the three leaders affect the outcome of the negotiations?

Skinny questions often begin with “who,” “what,” “when,” or “where.” Fat questions often begin with “how” and “why.”

**3. Ask questions that drill down into what matters most.** Instead of asking questions randomly, focus on something important (often with a fat question). Then follow up on that one thing (often with skinny questions).

# Infer

**1. An inference is an educated guess.** Certain words, phrases, and ideas help us discover additional information and gain valuable insight.

Damon enjoyed the long weekend over Labor Day. But when the alarm clock rang on Tuesday morning, he pretended he didn't hear it. When that didn't work, he threw it across the room and pulled the covers up over his head.

- **Inference:** It's the first day of school; Damon doesn't want to go.
- **Inference:** Damon is very angry about the summer being over.

An inference is an educated guess, but it's just a guess. Most inferences have to be confirmed with other clues we encounter in other places.

**2. Successful inferences tell us more than what is written.** There's often more to a piece than just the words. Our job is to infer what that is.

As he drifted into an uneasy sleep, he flashed on his father sitting alone in a room. Where was he now? Why couldn't Damon be there, too?

- **Inference:** Damon is angry but it's not about having to start school.
- **Inference:** Damon misses his father.

**3. Writers sometimes show us one thing to tell us another thing.** What writers show us is an example of what they want us to know.

SHOW	TELL
...long weekend over Labor Day.	It's the first day of school.
...he threw it across the room...	Damon is angry.
Where was he now?	Damon misses his dad.
Why couldn't Damon be there, too?	Damon wants to go and live with him.

**4. Inferences work best when we tie them to the text.** When you make an inference, keep track of the words and ideas that inspired it.

# Clarify

**1. Start with what's clear, then work on what isn't.** The parts that are clear form the foundation we build on to tackle the parts we're unsure of.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,

- **What's clear?** This is a description of a foggy night in a city.
- **What isn't?** Strange phrases that don't sound like a weather report.

**2. Identify what's not clear and try to make sense of it.** What, specifically, is not clear? How can we explain it so it makes sense?

DIG IT OUT	CLEAR IT UP
...rubs its back..., rubs its muzzle..., licked its tongue...	This what an animal might do. The fog is like an animal.
...corners of the evening...	Cities have corners, evenings don't.
...the pools that stand in drains,	It's damp; it's been raining.

The best ways to clear something up are: (1) Ask a question; (2) Make an inference; (3) Discover the meaning of an important word; (4) Use context.

**3. Read ahead to confirm and draw your conclusion.** The parts that are clear form the foundation we build on to tackle the parts we're unsure of.

Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

- **Confirm.** "Curled... and fell asleep."  
It's definitely an animal.
- **Conclude.** It's a metaphor. The  
fog is a cat!

If you can't confirm or conclude, go back and clarify again. Or move on to the next part and use new information to improve your understanding.

# Question-Infer-Clarify™

**1. Use Question-Infer-Clarify to improve your understanding of a challenging text.** Ask questions first. Then infer the answers. Don't worry if you get them right or wrong, just make good guesses. Then, using both your questions and your answers, clarify your understanding of the passage.

## QUESTION

What's a "U-2 flight"?

What's a "blockade"?

What was the "Bay of Pigs"?

How does a blockade "send a clear message"?

What is "escalation"?

They were unsure of what action to take, but convinced that action was called for. By October 19, U-2 flights showed four sites operational. At this time, three options were considered: air strikes, invasion, and blockade. Memories of The Bay of Pigs dampened enthusiasm for sending in troops. And when further assessments suggested that air strikes could result in 10-20 thousand casualties, and another U-2 flight discovered bombers and cruise missiles along the northern shore, a decision was made to put a blockade into effect. A strong but limited action that sent a clear message and left options open if escalation was called for, a blockade was technically an act of war, so the term "quarantine" was used.

## INFER

A "U2 flight" tells them about weapons.

A blockade stops people from coming or going.

The Bay of Pigs was a battle that didn't go well.

The message was to stop building missiles.

Escalation means "going up".

## CLARIFY

They didn't know what the right thing was to do but they knew they couldn't just let them keep building missiles. The invasion seemed too risky because of what had happened before. And air strikes would have killed too many people. The blockade seemed like a good idea because it would stop them from building more missiles but not risk too many lives. They didn't want to start a war, so they called it a quarantine instead.

**2. Improve comprehension by repeating the process.** If parts of the passage still don't make sense, question, infer, and clarify again.

# Close Reading

When every word counts

The cacophony on the floor was deafening. No one heard the piercing whine of the alarms. But they could see the smoke billowing as it began to fill the room. Panic-stricken, people made a frenzied rush for the exits. Initially, they could squeeze themselves out like toothpaste from a tube. But soon the exiting ceased as bodies crammed the tightly constricted doorway. As a teeming mass of humanity attempted to push itself forward, those in the back, behind the bar, the stage, and the equipment, had the realization that this would be their last shift. With a wry smile, a waitress said to her manager, “Does this mean I can have the night off tomorrow?”

# Close Reading

When every word counts

They were so far behind that a different outcome was inconceivable. But they weren't discouraged. In fact, the huge deficit seemed ironically to buoy their spirits. Who would blame them if they lost now? Relaxed and brimming with newfound confidence, their play become more aggressive—almost reckless—with each incursion into enemy territory. They took unimaginable shots and made them. They attempted risky steals and won back the ball. Miraculously, with 30 seconds remaining, they found themselves within striking distance. But when the realization of this improbable victory washed over them, they turned back into the team they really were and relinquished all hope of success.

# Notes



# Writing Strategy Reference



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)

# Draw-Label-Caption™

**1. Draw first; label second; caption third.** Work fast. It's not an art project.



I'm throwing the Frisbee with my dog.

**2. Make sure the caption captures the scene.** Work hard to make these few words convey the most important information to your readers.

- **Good.** I'm throwing the Frisbee with my dog.
- **Better.** As I turn to the throw the Frisbee, a huge gust of wind blows up.
- **Best.** No matter how windy it is, my dog still loves catching the Frisbee. But as I turn to throw it, a huge gust blows up that almost knocks me over, and I think for a minute that it might carry him away when he jumps in the air.

**3. Turn labels into sentences.** Any word or phrase can become a sentence.

- **Birds.** The birds can hardly fly because the wind is so strong.
- **Trees.** They're flopping all over the place.
- **Wind.** A huge gust almost knocks me over.
- **Dog.** His tail is wagging and he's full of energy.

**4. Turn sentences into paragraphs.** Add new material as it comes to you.

No matter how windy it is, my dog still loves catching the Frisbee. But as I turn to throw it, a huge gust blows up that almost knocks me over, and I think for a minute that it might carry him away when he jumps in the air. His tail is wagging and he's full of energy. But I'm looking at the trees in the distance. They're flopping all over the place. The birds can hardly fly. Even with all the energy in the world, I don't think my little dog has much of a chance.

# Chaining

**1. Write sentence after sentence like links in a chain.** Take the best part of the first sentence and use it to write a second sentence:

SENTENCE #1	LINK (Best Part)	SENTENCE #2
My dog can do the most amazing things.	amazing things	If I throw a Frisbee, he can catch it in his teeth.
If I throw a Frisbee, he can catch it in his teeth.	catch it in his teeth	He snags it out of the air like a wild beast attacking his prey.
He snags it out of the air like a wild beast attacking his prey.	like a wild beast	It reminds me of those shark attack shows I've seen on TV.

**2. In addition to “best part” chains, you can also create “question” chains.** Think of a question a reader would ask and answer it.

SENTENCE #1	LINK (Question)	SENTENCE #2
I had a hard time training my dog to catch a Frisbee.	Why was it hard?	At first, when I threw it, he would just sit there.
At first, when I threw it, he would just sit there.	What did you do?	[So] I ran with the Frisbee and a treat in my hand and made him jump for it.
[So] I ran with the Frisbee and a treat in my hand and made him jump for it.	Did it work?	A week later, he could catch it if I threw it ahead a few feet.

**3. You can even chain paragraphs.** Make the next paragraph about the best part of the previous paragraph. Or create a paragraph that answers a question your reader might have.

# Detailing

**1. A detail is the answer to a question a reader might have.** To add details, think of the questions readers might have about what you've written:

WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN	QUESTIONS READERS MIGHT HAVE
As I leaned over the cliff, I saw my dog, Gepetto, dangling there, 100 feet above the rocks below, terrified, trying to hold his grip by clawing at the frail branches of a tiny tree.	How did he get like that? Did he fall to the bottom? What did you do to help him? How did you feel?

**2. Use the Idea-Details strategy to add support.** Read over what you've written. Pick the best sentence or phrase and add to it.

IDEA	DETAILS
As I leaned over the cliff, I saw my dog, Gepetto, dangling there, 100 feet above the rocks below, terrified, and trying to hold his grip by <u>clawing at the frail branches</u> of a tiny tree.	The branches were just twigs, hardly more than a quarter inch thick, cracking and tearing each time he struggled to climb up. I couldn't imagine how they were supporting his weight.

**3. Use the Tell-Show strategy to add descriptive "showing" detail.** Showing is more specific; it helps readers make pictures in their mind.

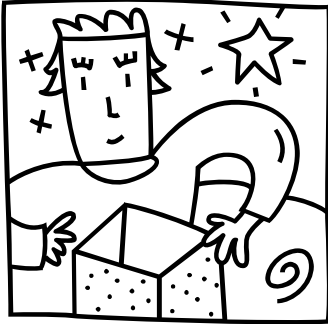
TELL	SHOW
I was scared.	I froze on the spot. I felt my heart race and my breathing quicken, but I couldn't move. I tried to yell for help but nothing came out.

**4. Use the Detail Categories strategy for the widest range of options.** Generate details by thinking of categories like the following:

- Questions
- Sights
- Objects
- Explanations
- Actions
- Sounds
- Descriptions
- Attributes
- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Examples
- Etc.

# Action-Feelings-Setting

**1. Start with a picture of yourself doing something.** Draw or make a picture in your mind. What are you doing? How do you feel? Where are you?



**Action.** I'm opening a present. I saved this one for last because I think it's the one I wanted most.

**Feelings.** I'm excited because it looks like the game console I wanted.

**Setting.** It's Christmas morning. There's torn paper all over the livingroom. My whole family is watching.

**2. Improve the action with the Idea-Details strategy.** Put the "action" on the left. On the right, add details in a bullet list.

IDEA	DETAILS
I'm opening a present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Struggle with the ribbon.</li><li>• Rip into the paper.</li><li>• Look for words on the box.</li></ul>

**3. Use the Tell-Show strategy to "show" your feelings.** To show your feelings, instead of telling about them, describe how you looked at the time.

TELL	SHOW
I'm excited.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My hands are shaking.</li><li>• My heart is pounding.</li><li>• I start to sweat.</li></ul>

**3. Put it all together.** Use your pre-writing to get started. Make changes. Move things around. Leave things out. Add new stuff. Make it sound great.

Christmas morning. Paper all over the livingroom. My family watching me as i unwrap my last present. It's the game cosole I asked for.

My hands shake as I struggle with the ribbon. My heart is pounding. I rip into the paper and look frantically for words on the box. Nothing. I start to sweat. It's a plain white box. Oh no! I can't believe it! It's a sweater.

# Great Beginnings

## 1. Get your readers' attention and make them want to read more.

Work fast. You've got ten seconds to hook your readers and reel them in.

- **Example.** Mr. Simmons didn't know that when he got on the bus that morning, he wouldn't get off.
- **Example.** The Mariners pulled off a crazy come-from-behind victory last night to take first place.

## 2. Base your beginnings on successful models. Look at the kinds of beginnings other writers use and try their techniques in your own writing.

- **Question.** What would happen if you ate every meal at McDonald's for a month?
- **Description.** Dust and dirt were everywhere. Cobwebs clung to the corners. But it was home. For now.
- **Action.** He raced down the stairs, flew out the door, hopped on his bike, and hit the road.
- **Sound.** Beep, beep, beep, beep. The alarm chirped. But I was sound asleep and didn't hear it.
- **Dialog.** "What do you mean we're not going to Disneyworld!" my sister screamed.
- **Feelings.** I had never been so terrified in my life. I still get goosebumps thinking about it.
- **Thoughts.** Ooops! I'm in trouble now, I realized, as I surveyed the broken glass on the kitchen floor.
- **List.** Sore muscles, mosquito bites, no video games. That's what camping means to me.

## 3. Combine strategies for richer beginnings. It's good to try more than one beginning for a piece. Sometimes, you can even put them together.

- **Thoughts.** It's odd to be so hungry, I thought to myself, especially after eating those nine burritos.
- **Description.** Light flooded the dark kitchen and cool air hit my face as I bent down to peer inside.
- **Question.** Would I find the tasty snack I was looking for, or had someone cleaned out the fridge?

### Three Beginnings Combined

Light flooded the dark kitchen, and cool air hit my face as I bent down to peer inside. Would I find the tasty snack I was looking for, or had someone cleaned out the fridge? It's odd to be so hungry, I thought to myself, especially after eating those nine burritos. But here I was looking for a tenth.

# Happy Endings

**1. Wrap things up and give your readers something to think about.** Tie up loose ends but don't stop there. Send 'em off with something to chew on.

- **Example.** It took a while to convince Grandpa that his hearing aid hadn't been stolen by pirates. But we never did figure out what to do with all that jello.
- **Example.** As this season of *Mariner* miracles comes to a close, there's just one question on everyone's mind: Can they do it again next year?

**2. Base your endings on successful models.** Look at the kinds of endings other writers use and try their techniques in your own writing.

- **Question.** Why didn't I think it through more carefully? When will I ever learn my lesson?
- **Description.** Dead quiet. Nobody said a word. We just listened to the sound of the rain and wondered.
- **Remember.** If you're ever in that situation again, just remember: It's the green wire not the red wire.
- **Future.** We don't know when we'll run out of oil. But we know we'll run out some day—and soon.
- **Feelings.** He was laughing so hard I thought he'd fall over. And everyone else was laughing, too.
- **Advice.** Flu season is right around the corner. So get your shot before it gets you.
- **Lesson.** The guy who said "Slow and steady makes the grade" probably wasn't working on deadline.
- **Do.** Take a few minutes at the end of each day and think of all the good things in your life.

**3. Don't go back, go beyond.** Don't restate your beginning at the end, your reader already read it! Instead, take your reader just a little bit further.

**Beginning.** My father never had much money but he loved giving gifts. As a boy, I imagined him spending his last pennies on treasures just for me. As I grew up, I realized that the joy he took in gift giving had little to do with sacrifice. But my sense of him as a generous man never diminished.

**Ending.** I felt then as I do today that I missed something in my father. He was a hard man to understand. And an even harder man to love. But when I think about missing the value of a gift he gave me, I wonder what other gifts I missed. And how valuable they might be if I could find them now.

# Transition-Action-Details™

**1. Use Transition-Action-Details to pre-write any narrative.** It's perfect for memoir or other personal experience writing; great for fiction, too.

TRANSITION	ACTION	DETAILS
Last summer,	I went on vacation with my family to the ocean.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We go almost every year.</li> <li>• There's a lot to do.</li> <li>• My dog and I go exploring.</li> </ul>
On the third day,	I was walking with my dog, Gepetto, along a cliff overlooking the beach below.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 75 feet up above the beach.</li> <li>• On a narrow path.</li> </ul>
As we got up to the highest point on the cliff,	We saw a small animal scurry under some rocks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It startled me at first.</li> <li>• I just kept on walking.</li> <li>• Gepetto ran after it.</li> </ul>
TO BE CONTINUED...		

**2. Transition-Action-Details also works for other sequential forms.**

Historical events, directions, algorithms, processes, procedures, summaries, anything that goes step-by-step in a fixed order.

TRANSITION	ACTION	DETAILS
When the Turkish Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end of World War I,	Great Britain ended up administering Palestine.	League of Nations' Mandate System; League Covenant Article 22.
In 1917, at the urging of Zionist groups in England,	The British issued the Balfour Declaration.	"...the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people."
During the years of the Mandate, 1922-1947,	Many Jews immigrated to Palestine.	Mostly from Eastern Europe; many fleeing Nazi persecution in the 1930s.
TO BE CONTINUED...		

**3. Try this order: beginning, end, middle, details, transitions.** Start with the first "Action" box, then fill in the last "Action" box, and then the actions in the middle. Now, add details. Finally, fill in transitions if you need them.



# What-Why-How™

**1. Most logical arguments follow a “what-why-how” pattern.** It’s all about what you think, why you think it, and how you know you’re right.

- **“What” stands for “What do you think?”** This is your opinion, your main idea, or your thesis in a research paper.
- **“Why” stands for “Why do you think it?”** These are the reasons you think what you think.
- **“How” stands for “How do you know?”** This is the set of examples, explanations, and evidence that make up your support.

**What do you think?**  
The Nintendo Wii is the best new game console.

**Why do you think it?**  
It’s more popular than Xbox 360 or PS3.

**How do you know?**  
It’s sold more units than Xbox and PS3 combined.

**2. Use the What-Why-How strategy for expository and persuasive writing.** Essays, essay questions, editorials, research papers, recommendations, anything that requires you to sustain a logical argument.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?	WHY DO YOU THINK IT?	HOW DO YOU KNOW?
Driving is becoming a less desirable means of getting around.  <i>This is the main idea or thesis. Stating it as a single complete sentence will help your piece stay clear and focused.</i>	It’s expensive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High gas prices.</li><li>• Insurance and repairs.</li><li>• New cars cost big \$\$\$.</li></ul>
	It’s dangerous.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More cars on the road.</li><li>• Drivers on cell phones.</li><li>• Accidents I’ve had.</li></ul>
	It’s bad for the environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pollutes the air.</li><li>• Uses natural resources.</li><li>• More roads to build.</li></ul>

**3. Focus on the “How” column and the “Three Es of Strong Support.”**

Use a combination of examples, explanations, and evidence.

- **Examples.** A story, an experience from your life or someone else’s.
- **Explanations.** Adding detail to a reason. A “why for a why.”
- **Evidence.** Facts and figures, statistical data, quotes, artifacts, etc.

# Content-Purpose-Audience™

**1. The Content-Purpose-Audience strategy addresses the most important parts of a piece of writing.** Working these out gives you a solid plan.

CONTENT	PURPOSE	AUDIENCE
<i>Main Idea + Key Details</i>	<i>Think + Do</i>	<i>People + Questions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Main Idea.</b> The one most important thing you want your readers to know.</li><li>• <b>Key Details.</b> The details that help your readers unlock your main idea</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Think.</b> What do you want your readers to think when they're done?</li><li>• <b>Do.</b> What do you want your readers to do when they're done?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>People.</b> The specific group of readers you are writing for.</li><li>• <b>Questions.</b> The things your readers will ask that you have to answer.</li></ul>

**2. Use the Content-Purpose-Audience strategy for expository, persuasive, informational, and research writing.** These kinds of writing require a clearly stated main idea, strong support, a clear sense of purpose, and the ability to anticipate and address your readers' questions.

CONTENT	PURPOSE	AUDIENCE
<b>Main Idea</b> The city should put stop signs at the intersection of Oak St. and Busy Ave.	<b>Think</b> Adding a stop sign will save lives and reduce costs in the long run.	<b>People</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Town Council</li><li>• Local residents</li></ul>
<b>Key Details</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased traffic</li><li>• Neighborhood kids play</li><li>• Two recent accidents</li></ul>	<b>Do</b> Authorize the money for a new stop sign in the next town budget.	<b>Questions</b> How much will it cost? Will it disrupt traffic? Will businesses suffer?

**3. Try this order: People, Questions, Main Idea, Key Details, Think, Do.** Starting with the audience first will help you do the best job possible of addressing their needs. Moving to content next will help you clarify your position and assess your support. Purpose comes in at the end. If there's a message you want your readers to remember, or some action you want them to take, this is the place to say it.

# Main Idea

**1. The main idea is the one most important thing you want your reader to know.** If you could boil a piece down to a single sentence that represented what it was all about, that would be your main idea. You know you've found one when you've found something that is:

- **A complete sentence.** It's not just the topic, it's what you want your readers to know about it.
- **A message, a moral, a lesson.** It's what you most want your reader to understand and benefit from.
- **Important to the writer.** This is the point of the whole piece; you have to really care about it.
- **Important to the reader.** Make a good guess about what your reader really cares about.

**2. The main idea may be stated or implied.** In expository and persuasive writing, you'll probably state your main idea literally, often at the beginning. But in narrative writing, and especially in fiction, the story will serve as an example of your main idea, and you'll let the reader figure it out.

## Stated Main Idea

A dog is the perfect pet to take on a trip. Last summer, I took my dog, Gepetto, to the beach. We played together everywhere. We explored the rocky shore and chased the seagulls. We even climbed up huge cliffs. I couldn't imagine doing any of these things with a cat or a bird or a goldfish. Could you?

Main Idea: "A dog is the perfect pet to take on a trip." (Written in the piece.)

## Implied Main Idea

A rabbit and a turtle have a race. The rabbit races ahead and takes a nap. The turtle plugs along and catches up. The rabbit races off but gets tired and stops to rest again. The turtle just keeps going, laying one huge turtle foot in front of the other, eventually lumbering his way to victory while the rabbit naps near the finish line.

Main Idea: "Slow and steady wins the race." (Not written in the piece.)

**3. Main idea is a powerful tool for revision.** Draft a bit, then ask yourself, "What's the one most important thing I want my reader to know?" Write your main idea in a single sentence at the top of the page. Now, reread your draft. If you find things that don't go with your main idea, consider deleting them.

# Sentence Structuring

**1. Sentences are made of parts.** There are four types of sentence parts: lead-in parts, main parts, in-between parts, and add-on parts.

On a bitter cold winter morning, Malcolm Maxwell, a young man of simple means but good intentions, left the quiet country town in which he'd been raised, and set off on the bold errand he'd been preparing for all his life.

- **Main Parts.** These parts usually contain the main action of the sentence: "Malcolm Maxwell, ... left the quiet country town in which he'd been raised, ..."
- **In-Between Parts.** These parts go in between other parts. They feel like a slight interruption: "...a young man of simple means but good intentions, ..."
- **Intro Parts.** These parts introduce other parts, especially main parts: "On a bitter cold winter morning, ..."
- **Add-On Parts.** These parts provided added information: "...and set off on the bold errand he'd been preparing for all his life."

**2. Parts go together to make patterns.** Use the patterns by replacing the model content with your own writing. Here are a few to start with:

- **Intro + Main.** As class began, Mr. Funston dreamed of Christmas vacation.
- **Main + Add-On.** He stared at the blank faces of his students, perplexed that he had nothing whatsoever to teach them today.
- **Main + In-Between + Main.** The Lesser Antilles, he realized, would be the perfect place for a warm winter hiatus.
- **Main + Add-On + Add-On.** He saw himself on the beach, baking in the mid-day sun, enjoying tasty snacks and refreshing beverages.
- **Intro + In-Between + Main.** Ten minutes later, having dismissed his students early to lunch, he sat at his computer hunting and pecking his way to a good deal on a two-week trip to the West Indies.
- **Main + In-Between + Add-On.** Mr. Funston leaned back in his big teacher chair, forgetting about the twelve pounds he'd put on at Thanksgiving, and immediately tumbled backward into the Halloween bulletin board he'd neglected to take down.

# Conventions Reading™

**1. Conventions reading.** Saying the punctuation along with the words is no way to read. But it's a fun and easy first step in learning to punctuate.

On a dark December night in 1776, as he led a barefoot brigade of ragged revolutionaries across the icy Delaware River, George Washington said, "Shift your fat behind, Harry. But slowly or you'll swamp the darn boat."

[NEW PARAGRAPH] [INDENT] [CAPITAL] on a dark [CAPITAL] december night in 1776 [COMMA] as he led a barefoot brigade of ragged rev [HYPHEN] olutionaries across the icy [CAPITAL] delaware [CAPITAL] river [COMMA] [CAPITAL] george [CAPITAL] washington said [COMMA] [QUOTE] [CAPITAL] shift your fat behind [COMMA] [CAPITAL] har ry [PERIOD] [CAPITAL] but slowly or you [APOSTROPHE] ll swamp the darn boat [PERIOD] [QUOTE] [END OF PARAGRAPH]

**2. Conventions inquiry.** What do you know? What do you want to know?

EXAMPLE	RULE	QUESTIONS/COMMENTS
December	Name of a month	What about days? And written out numbers?
George Washington	Name of a person	Any person? Or just famous people?
General	A title	Sometimes titles are not capitalized. Why?
"Ox"	A nickname	It's still a name even if it's not his real name.

**3. Conventions rules.** With a little practice, you can create your own writing rule book. Most rules sound like this: "Use a [name of mark] to/when/for [description of writing situation]." For example, "Use commas to separate items in a list." or "Use a capital letter for names, places, the word "I", things that are one-of-a-kind, and the beginning of a sentence."

**4. Edit Passes.** When you edit your writing, focus on one problem at a time in this order: words (left out, repeated, wrong, etc.), sentences, commas, capitalization, paragraphs, spelling, dialog, and "the little stuff."

## Notes

# Reading Strategy Reference



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)

# Phrase Breaking™

**1. Phrasing is a natural activity all readers understand.** Most readers don't think about phrasing. But they know it by heart:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of  
the United States of America and  
to the Republic for which it  
stands, one Nation under God, in-  
divisible, with liberty and justice  
for all.

I pledge allegiance  
to the flag  
of the United States of America  
and to the Republic  
for which it stands,  
etc...

**2. Phrasing breaks language into meaningful parts.** In the phrased version of *The Pledge of Allegiance*, each line makes sense by itself. Language works in phrases. And reading works best when we can see them easily.

**3. Phrases follow predictable patterns.** In general, phrases:

- Start with little words and end with big ones.
- Are 3-6 words long, occasionally one or two, very rarely 7 or more.
- Follow the grammar of the sentence and are read as a unit.
- Are separated from each other by a tiny "space", but not a pause.

**4. Phrasing makes hard texts easier.** Phrasing is helpful all the time. But it's especially important to concentrate on when:

- **You're having trouble decoding.** Stumbling on words makes ideas hard to understand.
- **You're faced with long sentences.** Big ideas are easier to understand in small parts.
- **You need more comprehension.** Careful phrasing is a great way to pick up small details.
- **You're having trouble with new vocabulary.** Phrasing helps you discover what a word means in relation to others. It also gives you clues as to how a word functions as a part of speech.
- **You're reading above your level.** When you're struggling, phrasing helps you read more accurately and more fluently.



# Expressive Reading

**1. Make your voice match the meaning.** Instead of reading like a robot, change your voice to match the meaning of what you read:

- **Change pitch.** Making your voice go up and down as you follow a sentence or switch characters helps you understand where ideas begin and end.
- **Change volume.** Saying some words louder and longer than others creates emphasis and helps you know what's important.
- **Change rhythm.** Stopping and starting, speeding up and slowing down help readers see how small parts of sentences combine to create complete thoughts.
- **Change tone.** Sometimes, readers use a soft, warm voice; sometimes their voice is cold and hard. Tone communicates feeling.

**2. Expressive readers use techniques that match the way we speak.**

The following strategies will make your reading sound more like talking:

- **Go slow.** To increase expression, decrease speed; extra expression takes extra time.
- **Repeat till it's complete.** If you mess up, repeat the sentence from the beginning.
- **Sentence high and low.** Start high, then lower the pitch slightly as you near the end.
- **Sentence fast and slow.** Start quick, then slow down slightly as you near the end.
- **Up at the end for a question.** The pitch of your voice springs up at the finish.
- **Straight up for an exclamation.** Increase both pitch and volume for an exclamation.
- **Stop at a period, pause at a comma.** Pause at colons, semicolons, and dashes, too.
- **Character high, narrator low.** Higher pitch for spoken words; lower for attributions.
- **Emphasize important words.** Call attention to a word or phrase with pitch, volume, tone, or timbre.
- **Once more with feeling.** Match your emotions to the meaning of the words.

**3. Expression works even when you read silently.** Listen to the voice inside your head as you read. You can still hear changes in expression. Pay attention to the “sound” of silent reading. It will help you improve.

# Monitor and Repair

**1. Track your understanding as you read.** Here are four situations to watch for that might mean you're missing something:

- **A feeling something doesn't make sense.** The most common clue is that what you're reading now doesn't make sense with what you've read before.
- **An unknown character.** Sometimes a character will seem to appear out of nowhere. Chances are you missed the introduction at an early point in the story.
- **A surprising change of place.** Sometimes you think you're still in one setting when the story has moved on to someplace else.
- **An idea out of the blue.** In non-fiction texts, most new ideas are logically connected to previous ideas. If something seems disconnected, you may have missed it when it was discussed before.

**2. Fix comprehension breakdowns with the big four fix-up strategies.**

Here are the four most common ways readers repair their understanding:

- **Reread.** Back up a bit and read it over again.
- **Rethink.** Stop reading. Think about what and what you're missing. Ask yourself a question or two. What is it, specifically, that you don't understand?
- **Review.** Flip back a bit. Skim headings or the first and last lines of paragraphs.
- **Retell.** If you've got someone to talk to, tell them a bit about what you've just read. If you're alone, tell yourself.

**3. Rereading is the most effective fix-up strategy.** Reading something a second time (or even a third or a fourth!) is the easiest and best way to improve your understanding. Here are four ways to go about it:

- **Reread the current sentence.** Go back to the capital letter and read through to the period. Don't stop till you get there.
- **Reread the current paragraph.** Go back to the first sentence and read through to the last.
- **Break it down.** Split paragraphs into sentences and sentences into phrases.
- **Focus on the tough spot.** Isolate the difficult sentence or phrase. Don't spend too much time on any a single word.

# Question

**1. The best way to find answers is to ask questions.** To figure out something about a text, pose a question and go looking for the answer.

On a dark January night, a stout man with a black bag limps down a narrow path into a wrap of fog. Unusual as it is, this nocturnal stroll is anything but unusual for Mr. Bostwick; his work brings him to many locations around this tiny town, and almost always at odd hours. Night is normal for Mr. B; in fact, many in his occupation find daylight distracting—too much human contact.

- **Question:** What is Mr. Bostwick on his way to do?
- **Question:** Why does he mostly work at night?
- **Question:** What's in the bag? Is he a doctor?
- **Question:** Is he doing something that might get him in trouble?

Asking questions helps you find answers as you move further into the text. The trick is to focus on the best questions so you can find the best answers.

**2. Fat questions are usually more interesting than skinny ones.** Asking questions from different angles inspires interesting insights.

When the “Big Three” met at Yalta to carve up Europe in the aftermath of World War II, the deck was stacked in Russia’s favor. Roosevelt was weak and tired, his health was failing. He would die in two months. Churchill was stubborn and defiant but eventually gave in. In contrast, Stalin was strong and energetic. He knew he could drive a hard bargain and win.

- **Skinny Questions:** Who won World War II? What did the leaders talk about? When did Roosevelt die? Where is Yalta?
- **Fat Questions:** How did the physical and emotional health of the three leaders affect the outcome of the negotiations?

Skinny questions often begin with “who”, “what”, “when”, or “where.” Fat questions often begin with “how” and “why.”

**3. Ask questions that drill down into what matters most.** Instead of asking questions randomly, focus on something important (often with a fat question). Then follow up on that one thing (often with skinny questions).

# Infer

**1. An inference is an educated guess.** Certain words, phrases, and ideas help us discover additional information and gain valuable insight.

Damon enjoyed the long weekend over Labor Day. But when the alarm clock rang on Tuesday morning, he pretended he didn't hear it. When that didn't work, he threw it across the room and pulled the covers up over his head.

- **Inference:** It's the first day of school; Damon doesn't want to go.
- **Inference:** Damon is very angry about the summer being over.

An inference is an educated guess, but it's just a guess. Most inferences have to be confirmed with other clues we encounter in other places.

**2. Successful inferences tell us more than what is written.** There's often more to a piece than just the words. Our job is to infer what that is.

As he drifted into an uneasy sleep, he flashed on his father sitting alone in a room. Where was he now? Why couldn't Damon be there, too?

- **Inference:** Damon is angry but it's not about having to start school.
- **Inference:** Damon misses his father.

**3. Writers sometimes show us one thing to tell us another thing.**

What writers show us is an example of what they want us to know.

SHOW	TELL
...long weekend over Labor Day.	It's the first day of school.
...he threw it across the room...	Damon is angry.
Where was he now?	Damon misses his dad.
Why couldn't Damon be there, too?	Damon wants to go and live with him.

**4. Inferences work best when we tie them to the text.** When you make an inference, keep track of the words and ideas that inspired it.

# Clarify

**1. Start with what's clear, then work on what isn't.** The parts that are clear form the foundation we build on to tackle the parts we're unsure of.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,

- **What's clear?** This is a description of a foggy night in a city.
- **What isn't?** Strange phrases that don't sound like a weather report.

**2. Identify what's not clear and try to make sense of it.** What, specifically, is not clear? How can we explain it so it makes sense?

DIG IT OUT	CLEAR IT UP
...rubs its back..., rubs its muzzle..., licked its tongue...	This what an animal might do. The fog is like an animal.
...corners of the evening...	Cities have corners, evenings don't.
...the pools that stand in drains,	It's damp; it's been raining.

The best ways to clear something up are: (1) Ask a question; (2) Make an inference; (3) Discover the meaning of an important word; (4) Use context.

**3. Read ahead to confirm and draw your conclusion.** The parts that are clear form the foundation we build on to tackle the parts we're unsure of.

Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

- **Confirm.** "Curled... and fell asleep." It's definitely an animal.
- **Conclude.** It's a metaphor. The fog is a cat!

If you can't confirm or conclude, go back and clarify again. Or move on to the next part and use new information to improve your understanding.

# Theme and Main Idea

**1. A theme is a general idea a writer explores in depth.** Themes are usually stated as single words or phrases: Love; The Pain of Growing Up; Perseverance; Global Warming; The Puzzling Popularity of Paris Hilton; Etc.

**2. The main idea is the one most important thing the writer wants you to know.** If you could boil a text down to a single sentence that represented what it was all about, that would be the main idea. You know you've found one when you've found something that is:

- **A complete sentence.** It's not just the topic, it's what the author wants you to know about it.
- **A message, a moral, a lesson.** It's what the author most wants you to understand and benefit from.
- **Important to the writer.** What one thing does the writer seem to care about most?
- **Important to the reader.** What do you care about most in this particular text?

**3. Theme and main idea are different but closely related.** A theme is something important about which a writer has something to say; a main idea is the one most important thing the writer has to say about it.

THEME	MAIN IDEA
Love	Love conquers all.
The Pain of Growing Up	We find our own way in own time.
Perseverance	Slow and steady makes the grade.
The Puzzling Popularity of Paris Hilton	We'll always have Paris.

**4. Specific techniques help you find themes and main ideas.** Here are two approaches that work most of the time for most readers:

- **Main Idea.** Ask "What's the one most important thing the writer wants me to know?" Answer in the form of a complete sentence. Don't include "The main idea is...."
- **Theme.** Look for examples of the same thing coming up again and again. These are "motifs." What do they have in common? What general idea do they all refer to?

# Statement and Support

## 1. The Idea-Details strategy is an easy way to organize statements and support. Any text can be organized with Idea-Details:

Learning is more than taking tests and moving to the next grade. For most of us, the challenges of life provide far more instruction than sitting in a classroom. As Mark Twain said, "Never let school interfere with your education."

IDEA	DETAILS
Learning is more than taking tests and moving to the next grade.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For most of us, the challenges of life provide far more instruction than sitting in a classroom.</li><li>• As Mark Twain said, "Never let school interfere with your education."</li></ul>

## 2. For logical arguments, use the What-Why-How strategy. Most arguments can be understood by asking three questions: What does the author think? Why does the author think it? How does the author know?

Driving is becoming more dangerous. I've almost been hit twice recently by people paying attention to electronic gadgets instead of the road. In a USA Today survey, 72% of drivers said they take cell phone calls while driving.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?	WHY DO YOU THINK IT?	HOW DO YOU KNOW?
Driving is becoming more dangerous.	I've almost been hit twice by people paying attention to electronic gadgets instead of the road.	In a recent USA Today survey, 72% of drivers said they take cell phone calls while driving.

## 3. The best arguments use examples, explanations, and evidence for support. Each type of support appeals to a part of our personality:

- **Examples:** Images and stories stir our emotions and draw us in.
- **Explanations:** These satisfy our curiosity and need for logic.
- **Evidence:** Facts and figures appeal to our sense of certainty and our desire to have new ideas validated by respected independent authorities.



# Summary and Explanation

**1. What's a summary?** A summary is a recounting of the important elements in a text, in the order they occur, so people will know what you're referring to. The Transition-Action-Details strategy is a good tool to use.

TRANSITION	ACTION	DETAILS
When his parents are killed by the evil Lord Voldemort...	Harry is left with his Aunt and Uncle, the Dursleys, on Privet Drive.	They're mean to him; he hates living there; he's often lonely and afraid.
After years of misery and suffering at the hands of his selfish relatives...	He receives an invitation to attend an unusual school called Hogwarts.	He learns he's a wizard and that Lord Voldemort is plotting to kill him.

TO BE CONTINUED...

Keep these three things in mind when you summarize:

- **Use the best stuff.** Tell only the important things in the order they occur.
- **Stick to the source.** Use only ideas from the text you're summarizing.
- **Keep it short.** The summary should be much shorter than the original.

**2. What's an explanation?** An explanation is a discussion of important elements in a text, so other people will understand your thinking. The What-Why-How strategy is a great tool for developing an explanation.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?	WHY DO YOU THINK IT?	HOW DO YOU KNOW?
In the end, Harry eludes Voldemort, but that's not his ultimate goal.	What Harry wants most is to be part of a family who loves him.	When he visits the Mirror of Esired, he sees his parents in the reflection.

Keep these three things in mind when you explain:

- **Tell it all.** Include everything an audience needs to understand your ideas.
- **Go beyond the source.** Use your own good ideas to make things clear.
- **As long as necessary.** Length depends on what others need to know.

**3. Summary and explanation work together.** For example, we rarely summarize something unless we need to refer to it as part of an explanation.



# The Five Big Questions

**1. What makes this text good?** Think about the language you use to talk about quality in writing.

- **Ideas.** Main idea, details, “showing”, purpose, originality, etc.
- **Organization.** Leads, endings, sequencing, pacing, transitions, etc.
- **Voice.** Personality, honesty, individuality, emotions, tone, etc.
- **Word Choice.** Strong verbs, usage, memorable phrases, etc.
- **Sentence Fluency.** Structure, rhythm, expressiveness, etc.
- **Conventions.** Punctuation, spelling, grammar, etc.
- **Presentation.** Formatting, layout, graphics, design, etc.
- **Story Elements.** Character, plot, setting, conflict, etc.

**2. What would make this text better?** Use the same categories from Big Question #1. Be thoughtful, be critical, be fair. But don’t rewrite the text.

**3. What’s the one most important thing the writer wants you to know?** This is the main idea. Your response should be something that is:

- **A complete sentence.** It’s not the topic, it’s what the writer wants you to know about it.
- **Important to the writer.** What one thing does the writer seem to care about most?
- **A message, a lesson, a moral.** It’s what the writer most wants you to understand and benefit from.
- **Important to the reader.** What do you care about most in this particular text?

**4. Why did the writer write this?** This is the writer’s purpose. To figure it out, remember “think and/or do.”

- **Think.** What does the writer want you to think?
- **Do.** What does the writer want you to do?

**5. What does the audience need to know to understand and appreciate this text?** Sometimes you can give people important background information that helps them understand the text and your assessment of it.

# The Five Facts of Fiction

**1. Fiction is all about characters.** Characters can be explored many ways but the “character trait” approach is probably the most common:

- **Physical Traits.** Anything relating to physical description.
- **Emotional Traits.** Overall mood, reactions to events, etc.
- **Social Traits.** Interactions with others, relationships, etc.
- **Intellectual Traits.** Thinking style, problem-solving ability, etc.

**2. Fiction is all about what characters want.** Sometimes characters want things, sometimes they want feelings, and sometimes they want both:

- **Things.** Possessions, money, a job, to be in a different place, etc.
- **Feelings.** Love, freedom, safety, any strong and positive emotion.

**3. Fiction is all about how characters get or don’t get what they want.** The plot of a story unfolds as characters try to get what they want.

- **Does the character get it?** Yes, no, sort of? Explain.
- **How does it happen?** What is the sequence of events?.

**4. Fiction is all about how characters change.** Some change a lot, some change a little, some don’t seem to change at all.

- **Beginning.** Character’s state of mind at the start of the story.
- **Change.** How does the change happen?
- **Ending.** Character’s state of mind at the end of the story.
- **Lesson.** What lesson do we learn from the character’s experience?

**5. Fiction is all about a world an author creates.** What’s in this world? What kind of world is it?

- **People.** Other characters and their relationships.
- **Things.** Important objects, activities, occurrences, etc.
- **Places.** The many different settings in the story.
- **Ideas.** Themes a writers wants to explore.

# The Five Text Connections

**1. Readers connect with texts in many ways.** Connections make reading fun and help you understand things. Here are five kinds of connections:

- **Text-to-Self.** When something you read reminds you of yourself.
- **Text-to-World.** When something you read reminds you of the world or life in general.
- **Text-to-Text.** When something you read reminds you of something else you've read.
- **Text-to-Media.** When something you read reminds you of a movie, TV show, song, play, painting, sculpture, dance, video game, or other creative representation.
- **Text-to-My-Text.** When something you read reminds you of something you've written.

**2. Different connections help you learn different things.** All connections are helpful but each type has something specific to offer.

- **Text-to-Self.** Tells us about what we like and don't like.
- **Text-to-World.** Helps us understand themes and main idea.
- **Text-to-Text and Text-to-Media.** Helps us assess quality.
- **Text-to-My-Text.** Teaches us about writing.

**3. Text-to-text connections are the hardest and most valuable.** It's hard to remember things from one text to the next, but connecting something in one with something in another can strengthen your understanding and improve your memory of both.

**4. Connections are enhanced by questions.** When you make a strong connection with a text, take a moment to explore it with these questions:

- **Text-to-Self.** How does the text remind you of you? How do you feel about that?
- **Text-to-World.** Is this about your life or life in general? Is there a lesson to be learned here?
- **Text-to-Text and Text-to-Media.** How do the presentations compare? Which do you like more?
- **Text-to-My-Text.** What do you appreciate about the text? Is there a technique you can use?

## Notes

# Content Area Strategy Reference



Teaching That Makes Sense  
[www.ttms.org](http://www.ttms.org)

# Topic Equations™

**1. Identify different areas of interest.** Use the Like-Fun-Care About-Interested In chart to make lists.

<b>THINGS YOU LIKE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money</li> <li>• Clothes</li> <li>• Pizza</li> <li>• Music</li> <li>• Movies</li> <li>• Video Games</li> </ul>	<b>THINGS YOU DO FOR FUN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseball</li> <li>• The Mall</li> <li>• Internet</li> <li>• Shopping</li> <li>• Party</li> <li>• Watch TV</li> </ul>
<b>THINGS YOU CARE ABOUT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• My Dog</li> <li>• My Community</li> <li>• People being treated fairly</li> </ul>	<b>THINGS YOU'RE INTERESTED IN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computers</li> <li>• Cars</li> <li>• Math</li> <li>• College</li> <li>• Getting a part-time job</li> </ul>

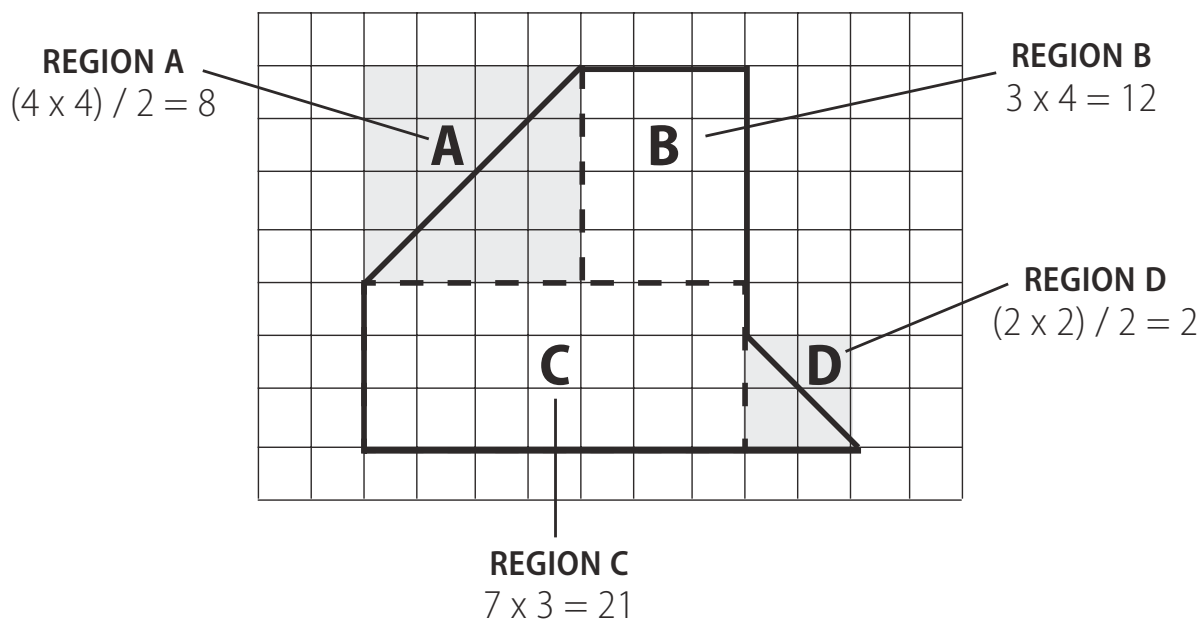
**2. Interest + Subject = Topic.** Use the Topic Equations chart to connect your interests to the subject you are studying.

	SUBJECT	TOPIC
Baseball	Civil War	Sports during the period; baseball as a popular pas-time during the war.
Money	Civil War	Standard of living; purchasing power of families; types of money; taxes.
Part-Time Job	Civil War	Employment rates; job opportunities for young people; wages; careers.
College	Civil War	College opportunities; admissions process; costs; fields of study; trades.
Music	Civil War	Popular music of the period; famous performers; music as a business.

# Draw-Label-Caption™

**1. Use the Draw-Label-Caption strategy to convey information.** The strategy will work well any time diagramming is required.

## FINDING THE AREA OF AN IRREGULAR POLYGON



The total area is 43. To find the area, I created four rectangular regions and added their areas. In Regions B and C, I multiplied length and width. In Regions A and D, I also multiplied length and width, but I divided by 2 because the triangles I was measuring have exactly half the area of rectangles.

**2. Use the Draw-Label-Caption strategy for note taking.** In less formal situations, the strategy can be used to quickly capture information in a visual format.

**3. Use the Draw-Label-Caption strategy to capture sequences that illustrate a progression or process.** Draw-Label-Caption is ideal for diagramming ideas that unfold over time including things like steps in a geometry proof, stages in a scientific process, or sketches that reflect the narrative progression of historical events.

# Idea-Details™

**1. Use the Idea-Details strategy for note taking.** Most textbooks are organized into short sections of ideas and supporting details:

Plants, algae, and even some bacteria use a process called photosynthesis to convert sunlight into energy. Photosynthesis occurs in two stages. In the first stage, light-dependent reactions capture the energy of light and use it to make high-energy carrier molecules called ATP that are used in the second stage. During the second stage, the light-independent reactions, sometimes called dark reactions, use the high-energy ATP molecules to capture carbon dioxide and create the beginnings of carbohydrates.

IDEA	DETAILS
Two stages of photosynthesis.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Light-dependent reactions use light to make molecules of ATP for the second stage.</li><li>2. Light-independent or dark reactions use ATP molecules to capture carbon dioxide and begin to produce carbohydrates.</li></ol>

**2. Use the Idea-Details strategy for constructed responses.** Here, the writer is answering the question, “Who won *The Battle of Antietam*?”

IDEA	DETAILS
The Union won the Battle of Antietam even though both armies lost the nearly same number of men.	<p>Kept Lee from invading the North.</p> <p>Kept Britain and France from supporting the South.</p> <p>Gave Lincoln a chance to introduce the Emancipation Proclamation.</p>

Even though both armies lost nearly the same number of men, the Union gained the most from the battle because it kept Lee from invading the North and kept Britain and France from supporting the South. It also gave Lincoln the chance to introduce the Emancipation Proclamation.



# Tell-Show™

**1. Use the Tell-Show strategy to make inferences.** In this example, from President Truman's radio speech after the bombing of Hiroshima, what would you say about Truman's knowledge and intentions?

The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians. But that attack is only a warning of things to come. If Japan does not surrender, bombs will have to be dropped on her war industries and, unfortunately, thousands of civilian lives will be lost. I urge Japanese civilians to leave industrial cities immediately, and save themselves from destruction.

TELL	SHOW
...the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base.	Either Truman didn't know it was a city or he didn't want Americans to know we'd bombed civilians.
I urge Japanese civilians to leave industrial cities immediately,...	Either Truman plans to drop more bombs or he just wants to scare the Japanese into surrendering.

**2. Use the Tell-Show strategy to improve the quality of description.** Here, we add visual detail to a generic description of a science experiment.

TELL	SHOW
Mystery Powder #4 caused a reaction when we put it in the solution.	At first, nothing happened when we put the powder in. But after about 15 seconds, it started to bubble a little. As it bubbled up, the solution began to slowly turn green. After about a minute, the bubbles stopped and eventually the green color faded until the solution was almost totally clear again.

# Action-Feelings-Setting™

**1. Use Action-Feelings-Setting to interpret important historical events.** The following paragraph describes negotiations at the end of World War II by representatives of the three victorious superpowers of the age.

When the “Big Three” met at Yalta to carve up Europe in the aftermath of World War II, the deck was stacked in Russia’s favor. Roosevelt was tired from the long journey and his health was failing; he would die just two months later. Churchill argued defiantly for free elections and the spread of democracy in Eastern Europe but eventually gave in to Stalin’s demands for Russian control. In contrast, Stalin was strong and energetic. With by far the largest army in Europe, he knew he could drive a hard bargain.

- **Action:** Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin negotiate control of Europe at the end of World War II.
- **Feelings:** Roosevelt was ill; exhausted from the long trip and in failing health. Churchill was frustrated with Stalin’s unwillingness to make concessions. Stalin was confident he could get whatever he wanted.
- **Setting:** Yalta was a resort city on the Crimean peninsula of the Black Sea in Russia. The Yalta Conference was the second of three post-WWII conferences attended by leaders from the United States, England, and Russia .

**2. Use Action-Feelings-Setting as a pre-write to capture important moments in history.** Here’s a brief description of the famous incident that touched off the Montgomery Bus Boycott and set the stage for the formal beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement.

- **Action:** Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus.
- **Feelings:** Parks was defiant; she was tired of giving in to rules she knew were unfair. The bus driver was surprised and angry.
- **Setting:** 6PM, Thursday, December 1, 1955, Montgomery, AL.

In Montgomery, AL, on the evening of December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks stood up for what she believed in by sitting down. A surprised and angry bus driver threatened to call the police if she didn’t give up her seat to a white person, but Ms. Parks defied the law and the custom of the time by refusing to move.

# Transition-Action-Details™

**1. Use Transition-Action-Details to describe a process.** This example describes how light impulses are transmitted from the eye to the brain.

TRANSITION	ACTION	DETAILS
When light enters the eye,	It hits the cornea first.	It passes the cornea, the aqueous humor, the lens, and the vitreous humor.
Eventually,	The light reaches the retina, the light-sensing part of the eye.	The retina has rods for vision in low light and cones for color and detail.
When light contacts these two types of cells,	A series of complex chemical reactions occurs.	A chemical called Rhodopsin creates electrical impulses in the optic nerve.
In an extremely fast reaction, beginning in a few trillionths of a second,	Rhodopsin breaks down and eventually forms Metarhodopsin.	This sends electrical impulses to the brain which are interpreted as light.

**2. Use Transition-Action-Details to summarize historical events.** Here's a brief summary of how Israel become a country.

TRANSITION	ACTION	DETAILS
When the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end of World War I,	Great Britain ended up administering Palestine.	League of Nations' Mandate System. League Covenant Article 22.
In 1917, at the urging of Zionist groups in England,	The British issued the Balfour Declaration.	"The establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."
During the years of the Mandate, 1922-1947,	Many Jews immigrated to Palestine.	Most were from Eastern Europe. Many fleeing Nazi persecution in the 1930s.
In 1947,	The UN proposed splitting Palestine into two states.	One for Jews, the other for Arabs. UN Resolution 181.

# What-Why-How™

**1. Use the What-Why-How strategy to organize information.** This example describes the positive and negative aspects of the Greenhouse Effect.

With all the talk about Global Warming, most people think the Greenhouse Effect is something bad that has to be stopped. But it actually has a positive side. Without it, the Earth wouldn't be warm enough for us to live. Because some of the sun's energy is trapped in the atmosphere, the average temperature is a comfortable 60 degrees. Without the Greenhouse Effect, the average temperature would drop to a chilly three degrees below zero. The problem is that human activity puts additional carbon dioxide and other so-called "Greenhouse Gases" into the air. These gases trap additional energy and the temperature goes up. In the 20th century, the Earth's temperature rose more than one degree. That doesn't sound like much, but it's enough to cause extreme weather, rising sea levels, and the melting of the polar ice cap.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?	WHY DO YOU THINK IT?	HOW DO YOU KNOW?
The Greenhouse Effect is both positive and negative.	It keeps the Earth warm.	Avg temperature is 60 degrees. Without the Greenhouse Effect it would be -3.
	Extra carbon dioxide and other gases cause temperatures to rise too high.	One degree in 20th century: bad weather, high sea levels, melting polar ice.

**2. Use the What-Why-How strategy to develop a thesis.** Here, a writer offers a counter-argument to the idea that Global Warming is a serious threat to our existence.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?	WHY DO YOU THINK IT?	HOW DO YOU KNOW?
Global Warming may not be the serious problem many people think it is.	Temperatures haven't risen any more than they normally might.	The increase in temperature could simply be the result of natural variations.
	Human beings don't have that much influence on the Greenhouse Effect.	Less than 10% of Greenhouse Gas emissions come from humans.

# Content-Purpose-Audience™

## 1. Use Content-Purpose-Audience to organize informational writing.

Here's a pre-write for a report on George Washington.

C O N T E N T	<b>MAIN IDEA</b>  George Washington was a reluctant hero. He would rather have been a farmer and a family man than a great general or the President.	<b>KEY DETAILS</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He lost most of the battles he fought.</li> <li>• He didn't want to be President.</li> <li>• His favorite thing to do was to work on his farm.</li> <li>• He missed his family and didn't like being away from them.</li> </ul>
	<b>THINK</b>  The great heroes of American history are often a lot more like regular people than how they are portrayed in school and in the movies.	<b>DO</b>  Think carefully about the way books and movies describe American heroes. Study the whole person, not just their reputation.
	<b>PEOPLE</b>  Kids in middle and high school who are studying American history.	<b>QUESTIONS</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why didn't he want to be President?</li> <li>• What did he say about his family life and working on his plantation?</li> <li>• What did Washington want most?</li> <li>• Why don't we usually learn about the personal side of George Washington?</li> </ul>

# Question-Infer-Clarify™

**1. Use Question-Infer-Clarify to improve your understanding of a challenging text.** Ask questions first. Then infer the answers. Don't worry if you get them right or wrong, just make good guesses. Then, using both your questions and your answers, clarify your understanding of the passage.

## QUESTION

What's a "U-2 flight"?

What's a "blockade"?

What was the "Bay of Pigs"?

How does a blockade "send a clear message"?

What is "escalation"?

They were unsure of what action to take, but convinced that action was called for. By October 19, U-2 flights showed four sites operational. At this time, three options were considered: air strikes, invasion, and blockade. Memories of The Bay of Pigs dampened enthusiasm for sending in troops. And when further assessments suggested that air strikes could result in 10-20 thousand casualties, and another U-2 flight discovered bombers and cruise missiles along the northern shore, a decision was made to put a blockade into effect. A strong but limited action that sent a clear message and left options open if escalation was called for, a blockade was technically an act of war, so the term "quarantine" was used.

## INFER

A "U2 flight" tells them about weapons.

A blockade stops people from coming or going.

The Bay of Pigs was a battle that didn't go well.

The message was to stop building missiles.

Escalation means "going up".

## CLARIFY

They didn't know what the right thing was to do but they knew they couldn't just let them keep building missiles. The invasion seemed too risky because of what had happened before. And air strikes would have killed too many people. The blockade seemed like a good idea because it would stop them from building more missiles but not risk too many lives. They didn't want to start a war, so they called it a quarantine instead.

**2. Improve comprehension by repeating the process.** If parts of the passage still don't make sense, question, infer, and clarify again.

# The Five Facts of Fiction™

**1. Fiction is all about characters.** In biography, we focus on one person. Here, we'll look at Abraham Lincoln as though he was a character in a novel.

Lincoln was hard working and practical. He persevered through failure in his career and tragedy in his family. Though he achieved many things, he never seemed happy. He may have suffered from depression. But that didn't stop him from being one of our greatest presidents.

**2. Fiction is all about what characters want.** What did Lincoln want in his life more than anything else?

Lincoln wanted to rise in politics as far as he could. But once he became president, his personal goals gave way to his obligation to a war-torn country. When the Civil War broke out at the beginning of his presidency, he wanted to hold the country together. Later on, he added to this goal the ideal of ending slavery.

**3. Fiction is all about how characters get or don't get what they want.** Did Lincoln get what he wanted?

Yes and no. The North won the Civil War and brought the South back into the Union by force. Lincoln oversaw the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution outlawing slavery. But he was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth early in his second term and so he did not get to oversee the important, and in many ways flawed, administration of Reconstruction as the country attempted to put itself back together.

**4. Fiction is all about how characters change.** How did Lincoln change?

Lincoln changed in his attitude toward slavery. Early in his life, he seemed willing to accept the idea of slavery existing in the Southern states. But by the middle of the war, he came to regard ending slavery as not only an important political act, but as an important moral act as well.

**5. Fiction is all about a world an author creates.** What kind of a world did Lincoln live in?

Lincoln lived through the most turbulent time in our nation's history. It was a world where people who shared many common values and circumstances became bitterly divided over an issue that had festered for almost 200 years.



# The Five Big Questions™

**1. What makes this work good?** Think about the things that are successful in this work. What has the author done well?

- **Quality.** What aspects or traits of this work represent good results? You may have specific written criteria that describes the qualities people are looking for. How does this work resemble those criteria?
- **Technique.** Quality refers to the finished product. Technique refers to the process of how the product was created. Do you notice the use of any effective techniques?
- **Models.** You may have examples of high quality work to refer to. How does this work compare with those models?

**2. What would make this work better?** Use the same categories from Big Question #1. What could the author do better? Be constructive in your criticism. That is, make sure your criticism gives the author the information he or she would need to construct a satisfactory solution.

**3. What's the one most important thing the author wants you to know about this work?** In a written work, this is the main idea. In other kinds of work, the one most important thing may be a message or conclusion that wraps things up in a single thought. In some circumstances, this message may have less to do with the work and more to do with the person who created it.

**4. Why did the author do this work?** This is the author's purpose. Sometimes we do things just because someone else said we had to. But that's not what we're talking about here. Another way of looking at purpose is to remember "think" and "do."

- **Think.** What does the author want the audience to think?
- **Do.** What does the author want the audience to do?

**5. What does the audience need to know to understand and appreciate this work?** Sometimes we can give people important background information that helps them understand the work and our assessment of it.



# The Three E's of Strong Support™

**1. You can support an argument with examples, explanations, or evidence.** Though any support is better than nothing, the best arguments use all three techniques.

- **Examples.** These are things that represent the point we are trying to make. In writing, they are often presented as little stories sometimes called “anecdotes”.
- **Explanations.** If people don't understand a statement we've made, or if they don't quite believe it, they may ask us to give them an explanation.
- **Evidence.** You can think of evidence as anything you could present in a court of law: facts and figures, quotations, artifacts, etc.

**2. Examples appeal to an audience's emotions.** Here's a writer using examples to talk about a serious problem in professional baseball.

I wonder how Hank Aaron will feel when Barry Bonds breaks his home run record. Records are broken all the time, but it looks like Bonds may have cheated by taking performance-enhancing drugs. Baseball fans everywhere will probably feel a little uncomfortable. And now, no one will know who the real home run king is.

**3. Explanations satisfy our curiosity.** The writer's position here is that Bonds' new record will hurt the game of baseball. This explanation tells why.

Statistics mean more in baseball than in any other sport. And the home run record is the most important statistic of all. When a cloud of suspicion hangs over the man who holds it, a cloud hangs over the entire game. People will just feel bad about it. But there won't be anything they can do.

**4. Evidence.** Here, the writer will use statistics from surveys to give his thesis more credibility. People can always question the legitimacy of evidence, but for the most part, they don't. That's why statistical data is such a popular way to make a point.

Recent surveys tell the story best. More than half of the people who count themselves as serious baseball fans say they will not accept Barry Bonds as the legitimate home run king. And almost two-thirds of fans say the league has been too soft when it comes to the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

# Knowledge Patterns™

## 1. Abstract something important by looking for common elements.

Say we're studying history and that wars keep coming up for us to learn about. Wars are full of battles and we always need to know which battles were important and why. As we study many battles, we see that some elements are the same in every one. Battles usually have two *sides*, they're fought on a certain *date* and in a certain *place*, they have an *outcome* whereby one side wins and another loses, and they have some *importance* in history otherwise we wouldn't be studying them.

**2. Encapsulate the concept so you can use it over and over.** Now we'll use the common elements we abstracted to set up a table we can use to fill in the new information we want to learn.

BATTLE	
Sides	
Date	
Place	
Outcome	
Importance	

**3. Model a new example you are trying to learn about.** To create a model of a particular battle, we fill in the blanks with the right information.

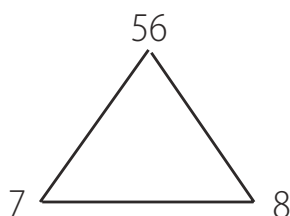
THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM	
Sides	The Union Army for the North; The Confederate Army for the South
Date	September 17, 1862
Place	Sharpsburg, MD (Antietam Creek)
Outcome	Both sides lost many men but the North is said to have won.
Importance	The loss caused General Lee to call off an invasion of the North. It also kept England and France from supporting the South. And it helped President Lincoln issue the Emancipation Proclamation.

# Associate-Manipulate-Regenerate™

**1. Associate the elements you need to learn.** Put questions with answers, words with definitions, problems with solutions, etc. Here, we'll be using a simple example with multiplication and division facts.

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
$7 \times 8 =$	56
$8 \times 7 =$	56
$56 \div 7 =$	8
$56 \div 8 =$	7

**2. Manipulate the information into a different form.** By changing the form of the information, we give our brain a chance to learn it in a different way. This improves our memory. If we can reduce the amount of information we're working with, that's even better. Here, I'm going to arrange the numbers in a triangle.



**3. Use the manipulated information to help you regenerate the original information you need to know.** Now I can practice my math facts by simply moving around the triangle.

$$7 \times 8 = 56 \quad 8 \times 7 = 56 \quad 56 \div 7 = 8 \quad 56 \div 8 = 7$$

No matter which number I start with or which direction I go, I know I can make a correct answer. In time, I'll be able to reduce the information even farther by throwing away the triangle and just using the three numbers 7, 8, and 56. This is my goal because I want to be able to quickly recall all four facts in the fact family as soon as I see any one of the three numbers.

# Identify-Plan-Execute-Check™

**1. Identify the problem.** The biggest challenge we have often comes from misunderstanding the problem.

- What am I being asked to do?
- If the problem is not stated as a direct question, can I restate it as a direct question?
- What information is available?
- What information is relevant to the solution?
- Is all the information present or does additional information need to be derived?

**2. Plan a solution.** Sketching out a simple plan before you begin working improves your accuracy and efficiency, and helps you spot problems early.

- Does this problem look like one I have solved before?
- Can this problem be broken down into smaller problems?
- Is there more than one way to solve this problem?
- Which part of the problem should I tackle first?

**3. Execute the plan.** Once you've got a plan, carrying it out is easy. All you have to do is follow your own instructions.

- Am I following my plan correctly?
- Am I discovering anything new that would cause me to go back to an earlier stage in this process?
- Am I making progress toward a correct solution?
- Is my work accurate?

**4. Check the solution.** Even with the best plan and the most careful execution you might still make mistakes. Check your work carefully.

- Can I solve the problem again in a different way?
- Does the solution directly address the problem?
- How is the solution to this problem similar to other solutions I have created?
- How can this solution be applied to other types of problems?

# Define-Connect-Extend™

**1. Learning vocabulary is about making associations.** Don't just study a new word and its definition. Study a related set of ideas that are associated with the word. This not only helps you learn the word more effectively, it helps you learn other things (including other new words) at the same time.

**2. Define the new word.** Look at different dictionary definitions but come up with your own in as few words as possible. Focus on language that is simple, accurate, and understandable. Don't make the definition harder to understand than the word you are defining.

phosphorescent = giving off light

**3. Connect the word with its use in a sentence, its origin, synonyms, other forms, etc.** Each time you make a connection, you give yourself another way to learn the new word.

- **Sentence.** "At night, the rock gave off an eery phosphorescent glow."
- **Origin.** From the Greek words "phos" (light) and "phoros" (carrier).
- **Synonyms.** glowing, gleaming, luminous, lustrous.
- **Forms.** phosphorescence (noun), phosphorescently (adverb).

**4. Extend your understanding.** Look for additional information about the word and write down ideas that interest you. Think also about connections to your own life. Often, we've heard words before, or heard about things related to them, that can help us with our understanding.

- Any time we see something that says "glow in the dark" that means it's phosphorescent. It's like that paint people use to put stars on the ceilings in their bedrooms.
- Related to *incandescent* which refers to something that glows when heated. *Phosphorescent* means something that glows when exposed to ultraviolet light.

**1. Arranging information in a grid makes it easier to learn.** The grid improves memorization because it helps us associate information. Every cell in the interior of the grid is associated with two categories and all the other cells with which it shares a horizontal row or vertical column. These relationships help us store and recall information. For example, we can use the chart to extract ideas like this: “To calculate the mechanical advantage of an inclined plane, divide the length by the height to which it is raised.”

**2. Select important elements and their common traits.** Here, we’ve created a grid to help us learn about four simple machines: the inclined plane, the lever, the pulley, and the wheel and axle. For each machine we want to learn the description, real-life examples, and the formula for calculating mechanical advantage.

Four Types of Simple Machines				
Machine	Inclined Plane	Lever	Pulley	Wheel & Axle
Description	A surface that is higher at one end than at the other.	A bar resting on a point (called the “fulcrum”).	A grooved wheel with a rope through it.	A wheel with a rod through the center.
Examples	Ramp, staircase, ladder.	Bottle opener, shovel, wheelbarrow	Flagpole, crane, window blinds	Doorknob, steering wheel, roller skates
Mechanical Advantage	Length divided by Height to which it is raised.	Distance from Fulcrum to Force divided by Distance from Fulcrum to Load.	Number of Ropes.	Radius of Wheel divided by Radius of Axle.

# Ten-Two-Three™

**1. Break large amounts of new information into manageable parts no more than ten minutes long.** Whether you're listening to a lecture, reading from a textbook, or watching a presentation, there's a limit to how much new information you can absorb at one time. Most of us can take in and remember about 10 minutes worth of new content before our attention begins to wander and we start to forget things.

**2. Organize new learning by taking at least two minutes to write down the most important ideas you've just encountered.** Rather than trying to take notes while you learn something new, give your full attention to the information and then take a two-minute break to write down the most important ideas. This keeps you from missing things and getting lost. It also helps you do a better job of only writing down the most important things you've just learned.

**3. Share your ideas with the group and listen to what other people share.** You will hear some of the ideas you just wrote down. But you'll also hear important things you didn't think of. When someone shares something important that you didn't write down, add it to your notes. You may also hear things that help you correct and clarify your ideas. Listen closely during sharing to see how your ideas compare with everyone else's.

**4. Repeat the process as often as you can in the time available.** The Ten-Two-Three process allows you to make one cycle through your material every fifteen minutes. But if you shorten the first block of time, you can increase the number of cycles. In general, the more cycles you make, the more notes you take, and the clearer you become on the material. Feel free to shorten the listening-reading-studying time. But don't cut back on the writing and the sharing. These are the two most important parts.



# Learning Patterns

## *Teach Smarter Not Harder*

Imagine a structure 13 years tall, 180 days wide, and five subjects deep. This is a K-12 education. Each cell in this structure represents a single class period in a single subject for a total of 11,700 educational opportunities.

By using *Teaching That Makes Sense® Learning Patterns™* we can reduce this academic load for students, simplify planning and instruction for teachers, and help more kids learn more things in less time and with less teacher effort.

*Learning Patterns* are cross-curricular tools optimized for successful teaching in any subject or grade. They are designed to be used, re-used, and shared across classrooms without requiring extensive training or preparation.

By analyzing standards documents and the methods of effective teachers, *Teaching That Makes Sense* has identified underlying commonalities in learning targets across the curriculum. These commonalities represent dozens of potential assignments that can be taught and learned through a small set of foundational skills.

Consider exposition. Students consume and create expository information in many ways: they read expository texts, write expository essays, create reports, answer test questions, etc. As varied as expository expression is, it has a simple underlying structure that can be explained by a single *Learning Pattern*.

Some *Learning Patterns* cover skills like narration, exposition, and persuasion. Others help teachers and students with things like assessment, reading comprehension, and memorization. The same patterns can be used across grade levels and subject areas as well, so kids take their learning with them as they grow.

*For more information about Learning Patterns click [here](#).*



*“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”*



# Agile Transformation

## *Building Collective Capacity for School-Wide Change*

We are discovering better ways of improving schools by doing it and by helping others do it. Through this work, we have come to value:

- **People.** *Individuals and interactions* over policy and politics;
- **Achievement.** *Maximum potential* over minimum competence;
- **Courage.** *Fierce collaboration* over comfortable compromise;
- **Agility.** *Responding to change* over following a plan.

The items on the right are important, but we value the items on the left more.

*Agile Transformation* is grounded in two principles: **(1)** People are more successful when they enjoy their work; and **(2)** Schools are more successful when they support people in developing the autonomy, competence, and relatedness that makes their work more enjoyable. Features of *Agile Transformation* include:

- **Paired Practice.** Nobody works alone. Everyone has a team and a teammate.
- **Rapid Iteration.** Sprint through big problems one small problem at a time.
- **Making Sense.** What do we do? Why do we do it? How do we know it works?
- **“Stand Up” Sessions.** What did you do yesterday? What are you doing today? What do you need to be successful? Agile leaders remove impediments.
- **Successful Failure.** Fail fast, fail smart. No blame games. Apply what you learn as you move closer to your goal with each iteration.
- **Souls and Roles.** Aligning what we do with who we are.
- **“Just in Time” Solutions.** Handle problems as they arise. Respond as needed.



*“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”*

# Essential Elements of Agile Schools

## *The Qualities of Effective Educational Communities*

1. **Agile schools work because people choose to make them work.** We believe in freedom of choice, and that making the choice to participate fully in teaching, learning, and leading is the most important choice we can make.
2. **Agile schools love to learn.** We believe that learning is inherently enjoyable and that giving learners a responsible degree of autonomy in their individual pursuit of knowledge and skill makes it even more so. Agile educators are learners, too.
3. **Agile schools take a constructive approach to failure.** We believe failure is a normal part of success. Kids struggle to learn. Teachers struggle to teach. Administrators struggle to lead. We all experience failure on the way to solving new problems. The faster we fail, the more solutions we try. The smarter we fail, the more knowledge we bring to the next iteration. Instead of looking back at problems, Agile schools look forward to solving them.
4. **Agile schools are always getting better.** We believe there's almost always a better way of doing something, and that it's almost always worthwhile trying to figure out what that better way is. Agile schools value progress, and the appropriate measurement thereof, because progress is the true indicator of learning.
5. **Agile schools empower people to empower others.** We believe that individuals—not systems or policies—are the true sources of power in our schools. Our responsibility is to use our power in service of the greater good, and to teach students how to use their power that way, too.
6. **Agile schools achieve extraordinary results.** We believe in transformative learning that goes far beyond incremental improvements in test scores. Adults in Agile schools also strive for extraordinary achievement in their profession as well.



*“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”*

# Essential Elements

## *continued...*

7. **Agile schools are based on deeply-held beliefs, clearly-articulated values, and a firmly-rooted sense of commitment.** We believe that the most successful schools are those run by people who know what matters most to them and who possess an unshakable determination to get it.
8. **Agile schools are communities where people make a difference and connect with something greater than themselves.** We believe that the drive to contribute is part of human nature. Our role is to guide people in directing their contribution toward its highest and best use.
9. **Agile schools value ownership, positive attitudes, high expectations, and unwavering optimism.** We believe that making a good life is about making good choices, that the pursuit of happiness is an inalienable right, and that self-mastery is the key to its rightful exercise.
10. **Agile schools embrace the risk inherent in the achievement of great things.** We educate for maximum potential not minimum competence. We believe that all learners have within them extraordinary strengths and untapped resources, and that learning is only limited by our willingness to attempt what has never before been attempted. We welcome change, we innovate, and we seek out challenges that organize and measure the best of our energies and skills.
11. **Agile schools affirm self-knowledge as the most valuable knowledge and self-determination as the most basic right.** We believe that introspection, self-disclosure, and intellectual honesty are essential to personal transformation. We seek to support young people in becoming the adults they want to be.
12. **Agile schools are communities where no one is above the rules, everyone has a voice, freedom is sacred, equity and excellence are not mutually exclusive, and the highest goal of education is contributing to the present and future well-being of individuals who can thrive independently in a modern democracy.** Agile schools value college preparation, career fulfillment, and engaged citizenship, but we value something else even more. Collegiate, career, and civic achievement are important, but they are means to ends, not ends in themselves. Human happiness, meaningful contribution, and sustained well-being of self and community are the ultimate ends to which Agile schools aspire on behalf of the children and families we serve.



*“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”*

TEACHING THAT MAKES SENSE



*“Learning begins with teaching that makes sense.”*