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1.1 Writing About What’s Important to You

**Key Information**

When you do personal writing, you are free to focus on whatever is important to you. Personal writing offers you a way to examine and understand your innermost thoughts and feelings.

- **A. Writing About Myself**

Write your thoughts and feelings about each of the following statements. You may write formally or informally. Let your feelings lead the way.

Accomplishments or personal qualities that I’m proud of _____________________________

__________________________________________

People or situations that make me laugh _____________________________

__________________________________________

Events that I hope will happen someday _____________________________

__________________________________________

Situations that make me feel nervous _____________________________

__________________________________________

Things that make me sad sometimes _____________________________

__________________________________________

- **B. Writing About What’s Important**

Choose one of the topics you listed in Part A. Write a paragraph telling about the topic and explaining why you feel the way you do. Try to include words and images that reflect your unique personal outlook. Use additional paper if necessary.

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
A. Examining Your Day

Yesterday may have been a typical day, or it may have been special. Think about yesterday. Record what you did during each part of the day. For each part, comment about your feelings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you did</th>
<th>Your feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the morning</td>
<td>___________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At lunchtime</td>
<td>___________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After lunch</td>
<td>___________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Writing a Journal Entry

Write a journal entry about the day you described above. Remember that a good journal entry is one that includes events as well as your reactions to them. Use words that you use in everyday conversation, as if you were talking to yourself or a friend. Make sure you write something you can share with your teacher.

..................................................................................................................
1.3 Writing to Celebrate

Key Information

Personal notes, letters, cards, and invitations are important links between you and your friends. When you take the time to write personal messages, you share a little bit of yourself with the important people in your life.

A. Getting Started

Did you ever put off writing a note or letter that you knew you should write? Sometimes getting started is the hardest part. Practice getting off to a good start by writing a first sentence for each of the following kinds of personal messages. Try to make your mood clear through your choice of words.

1. an invitation to a surprise party

2. a letter to a friend who moved away

3. a note to an adult family member, thanking him or her for a gift

4. an invitation to a school concert in which you’ll perform

B. Writing a Personal Message

Finish one of the personal messages you began in Part A. Think about who will be reading your message. That will help you select the best words to use. If you choose the invitation, you’ll need to include information about the time, date, and place of the event.
1.4 Writing About Yourself

**Key Information**
Sometimes you experience something so unusual or memorable that you want to describe it to a wide audience. In this case your writing must be more formal than other kinds of personal writing. Word choice and sentence structure should follow the accepted rules.

**A. Planning Your Writing**
Imagine that you have just appeared on a TV game show where you won prizes galore. You want to write about what happened to you as a contestant. Fill in the cluster diagram below with details of the experience and your feelings about it. Include details about what you saw, heard, and felt.

![Cluster Diagram]

**B. Writing About a Personal Experience**
Think of a time when you felt a strong emotion such as joy, fear, or surprise. Write a short paragraph describing what happened and how you felt about it. Begin with a sentence that clearly shows the emotion you experienced.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
**A. Learning About a Character**

Read the following excerpt about a girl who is determined to tame a wild horse. As you read, think about whether or not you would follow the same course of action that she takes.

I started to walk slowly toward the pony. I expected him to shy off to the far end of the corral. Instead he ran straight at me.

I was too surprised to move. . . . He charged right at me and bit my arm. I had on a heavy jacket, so it wasn’t too bad, but it made me mad. I didn’t have a rope so I grabbed his mane and jerked his head down. . . . After a minute he quieted down, but I got a look at his eyes, and I knew he was figuring what to do next.

Barbara Corcoran, *The Cherub and My Sainted Grandmother*

How would you have felt if you had been the girl?

Would you have acted the same way, or would you have done something else?

**B. Writing a Response to a Character**

Write a paragraph telling what you think about a character in a book or story. Select an important incident from the plot, and explain why you believe the character did the right thing in that situation. Be sure to tell who the character is and what story he or she appears in. Use additional paper if necessary.
A. Recording Details

Imagine that you have experienced each of the following situations. Think of three details that communicate what happened and how you felt about the experience. Record the details in the space provided.

1. a trip downtown __________________________________________________________

2. a day at the beach _______________________________________________________

3. a meal at a fast-food restaurant_____________________________________________

4. a walk through the park __________________________________________________

B. Writing for Your Audience

Write two paragraphs about an important moment in your life. The first paragraph should be written for only you or a good friend to read. The second should be written for a wider audience, such as the readers of the school newspaper. Use additional paper to jot down possible ideas for your paragraphs. When you have selected the important moment you plan to share, draft several sentences for each paragraph to help get yourself started. Be sure to keep each audience in mind as you write. Revise and edit your work, and write your finished paragraphs below or on another sheet of paper.
Recognizing the Stages in the Writing Process

Review the writing process. Then answer questions about two writing projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prewriting</th>
<th>Decide on a topic, an audience, and a purpose. Find information and organize the ideas.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drafting</td>
<td>Put your thoughts down on paper in sentences and paragraphs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revising</td>
<td>Review the draft and change it to make the ideas clearer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing/Proofreading</td>
<td>Correct errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing/Presenting</td>
<td>Share your writing with an audience.</td>
</tr>
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1. Julie lost her cat. She hurriedly wrote a description of it and posted it on the bulletin board of a neighborhood store. Later, when she saw her sign, she noticed some spelling errors and unclear numerals in her phone number.

Was the prewriting stage hard or easy for Julie? Give reasons for your answer.

Julie did not write her notice for school, and it was not graded. Did her skipping the editing stage matter? Tell why or why not.

2. Chou’s task was to summarize a twelve-page chapter in his textbook. His teacher challenged him to state all the important ideas in half a page. His first version took three pages. His fourth version, finally, met the challenge.

To which stage of the writing process did Chou give the most time? Explain.

Other students in Chou’s class also summarized the chapter in less than half a page. Do you suppose all the papers were exactly the same? Why or why not?
2.2 Prewriting: Finding and Exploring a Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keeping a notebook and brainstorming are two ways to find ideas to write about. Clustering can help in developing a topic. When you cluster, you write down the topic and any related ideas, drawing links to discover connections and areas of special interest.</td>
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**A. Brainstorming**

Choose one of the general topics below. Circle your choice. In two or three minutes write ten ideas related to the topic. Do not work out connections or decide how strong a new idea is. Just write down a word or phrase about it.

plants  wild animals  pets  sports  movies  music  transportation

---

**B. Clustering**

Choose one idea you wrote in Part A. Write it in the center oval below. In the other ovals write names or phrases describing ideas, things, places, or people related to that idea. Draw lines between the ovals to show connections.

---

**C. Making Connections**

Choose one line you drew above. In what way or ways are the ideas in the two ovals connected? Write a sentence explaining the connection you had in mind.
2.3 Prewriting: Determining Purpose and Audience

Key Information
Most writing accomplishes one of these four purposes: telling a story, describing, informing, or persuading. A writer makes decisions about form, length, and style based on the purpose for his or her writing and the audience for whom the writing is intended.

A. Considering Purpose

Use the following questions to develop four different ideas about dogs. For each purpose describe an essay or story you might write.

1. Telling a Story: Have you ever had a pet dog? Has a dog ever given you a problem? What personal experiences have you had with dogs?

2. Describing: Is there a particular dog you could describe? A breed of dogs? Can you create a word picture of yourself with a certain dog?

3. Informing: Have you ever done research on dogs before choosing one as a pet? What do you know about training a dog or keeping it healthy?

4. Persuading: Could you persuade your parents to let you own a dog? Should new regulations be passed to protect dogs or to protect people from dogs?

B. Considering Audience

Choose one of the purposes for writing about dogs from Part A, and describe an audience for which you could write. Discuss the age of the audience, its attitude toward dogs, and anything else that would help you make your writing appealing to that audience.
A. Stating Main Ideas

For each of these writing assignments, list three main ideas that you would use to achieve the purpose. Use complete sentences.

1. Describe the most interesting store you know.

2. Tell what happened during your first lesson in swimming (or sewing or another skill).

3. Explain how to play a game of your choice.

4. Persuade someone to join a certain hobby club.

B. Putting Ideas in Order

Review the main ideas you wrote for the four topics in Part A. Number the main ideas in the order in which you would cover them in a piece of writing.
2.5 Drafting: Getting It in Writing

Key Information

Strong prewriting notes often ease you into writing or drafting. Other techniques that help include imagining that you are writing as if to a friend, beginning at the easiest part, and concentrating on one step at a time. During drafting you should try to get all your ideas down quickly.

Turning Notes into Paragraphs

Below are notes for an explanatory essay about Elijah McCoy, followed by the essay’s introduction. Use the notes to write the next two paragraphs of the essay. Use additional paper if necessary.

McCoy’s life

• Born about 1844 in Canada
• Parents escaped from slavery
• Studied engineering in Scotland
• Worked as fireman-oilman for railroads in Michigan
• Invented automatic lubricator in early 1870s
• Success of lubricator made him wealthy

McCoy’s invention

• Lubricator oiled locomotive parts continuously.
• Stops for oiling were no longer necessary.
• Trains could run on schedule.
• McCoy adapted lubricator for other machines to make them run steadily.
• McCoy’s lubricators worked better than copies made by other people.
• Machinery owners wanted only McCoy’s original lubricators and asked for “the real McCoy.”

Have you ever heard the phrase “the real McCoy”? It means “the real thing” or “the best of its kind,” not a substitute or imitation. Many people who study language believe the phrase originally referred to Elijah McCoy, an African American engineer.
I

A. Criticizing Politely

As Catherine’s peer reviewer, you noted that her rhyming story for kindergarten children is very engaging. However, some of the vocabulary is too hard for little kids, and the rhymes get in the way of the plot. Make suggestions to help Catherine improve her paper, and point out any strengths. Remember that you should offer your comments respectfully.

B. Reviewing a Draft

Here is a first draft of a report for a social studies class. Read the draft, and evaluate it by answering the questions that follow on a separate sheet of paper.

Think of the Netherlands (Holland), and you think of windmills, canals, dikes, and wooden shoes. The Netherlands is known for these things because of the history of the land. You see, almost one-half of the Netherlands was made by humans. These areas are called polders. Polders are made by pumping out the water in a vast area of water. A dike is built around the area to be drained. The water is then pumped into a network of canals that drain into the sea. Windmills were used to provide the power to pump the water from an area and to keep the water pumped out. The canals also served as waterways. Dikes also help to keep water out and keep water from flooding the polders. The network of canals in the Netherlands serves to drain or channel the water to the sea. The famous wooden shoes developed because these wooden shoes protect the feet from damp or wet earth better than leather ones. Much of the culture or spirit of the Netherlands is deeply rooted in the creation of polders. The people of the Netherlands have continuously battled the sea by “building” land and keeping it from flooding. The Netherlands is densely populated.

1. What do you understand the main idea to be? Does it come across clearly?
2. Do the details in the paper support the main idea?
3. What is the writer’s purpose? Does the writer achieve his or her purpose?
4. Which parts, if any, seem unnecessary, confusing, or out of place?
5. Suggest possible improvements.
Improving a Paragraph

Examine the following paragraph, and answer the questions about it.

My grandmother’s embroidery is the most beautiful stitching you can find anywhere. My mother can sew pretty well, but she doesn’t have time for it. All the women in Grandma’s village sewed clothes for themselves and their families. Grandma learned how to embroider when she was growing up in Vietnam. As a young girl, she learned to make tiny stitches and to sew beautiful designs. My stitches aren’t tiny at all. She had a good reason to practice hard.

1. Is the main idea of the paragraph stated in a topic sentence? If so, write the topic sentence below. If the main idea is not stated, write a phrase or sentence identifying it.

2. Do all the sentences support the main idea? If not, which sentence(s) should be deleted? Identify any such sentence by its first three words.

3. Are all the details in the best possible order? Would adding (or deleting) a topic sentence improve the paragraph? Revise the paragraph and write your revision in the space provided.
Improving individual sentences makes your writing clearer and more lively. When you revise a draft, change fragments into sentences, and combine short, choppy sentences that express closely related ideas. Break run-ons and over-long sentences into shorter, simpler sentences. To avoid monotony, vary the length of your sentences and the order of your words and phrases.

A. Improving Sentences

Answer the questions, and combine the sentences where possible.

1. This recipe is for pancakes. It is an easy recipe. It uses canned pumpkin.
   Are the sentences on the same topic and closely related? ___________________________
   If so, combine them in one sentence. __________________________________________

2. Beethoven was born in 1770. Shakespeare was born in 1564.
   Are the sentences on the same topic and closely related? ___________________________
   If so, combine them in one sentence, using the word and. __________________________

3. Some breeds of hunting dogs are very old. The Salukis are one example.
   Are the sentences on the same topic and closely related? ___________________________
   If so, combine them in one sentence, using the words such as. __________________________

B. Improving a Paragraph

Revise this paragraph according to the directions. Write the improved paragraph on a separate sheet of paper.

The story of Cinderella appears in many cultures. The heroine in the Native American version was called Little Burnt Face. The Chinese Cinderella relied on a talking fish instead of a fairy godmother. The version best known in America is from Europe. The French writer Charles Perrault included it in his collection of fairy tales. The book was published in 1697.

1. Move the phrase “in the Native American version” to the beginning of the second sentence.

2. Move the phrase “instead of a fairy godmother” to the beginning of the third sentence.

3. Gain variety in sentence length by combining the last three sentences in one sentence that includes “from a collection of fairy tales by.”
2.9  Editing/Proofreading: Making Final Adjustments

Key Information
Your last review of your writing is a time to look for errors in spelling, grammar, usage, punctuation, and capitalization. You should indicate corrections with proofreading symbols. Finally, make a clean copy of your work.

A. Identifying Errors
In the following paragraph decide what, if anything, is wrong with each underlined word or phrase. In the space provided explain what the error is and how to correct it. If nothing is wrong, write correct as is.

It is the year (1) 400 the kingdom of Ghana is the most powerful in western Africa. It (2) controls rich mines of salt and gold, and caravans of merchants cross the (3) sahara every few weeks with goods to trade for these (5) resources. Cities are growing (6) wear the traders meet, with jobs for many (7) people. The (8) taxes collected on trade (9) supports the army and the (10) kings court.

1. ___________________________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________________________
3. ___________________________________________________________________
4. ___________________________________________________________________
5. ___________________________________________________________________
6. ___________________________________________________________________
7. ___________________________________________________________________
8. ___________________________________________________________________
9. ___________________________________________________________________
10. ___________________________________________________________________

B. Using Proofreader’s Marks
Copy this sentence exactly as it appears. Then, with a pen or pencil of a different color, mark it with proofreader’s symbols for needed corrections.

my brother his best freind and i went Downtown to seee a mvie
Planning To Present

For each of the following situations, tell how you would change or add to the writing to present it effectively in the new form.

1. For English class you wrote an essay on fire safety. Now you want to submit it to an essay contest sponsored by the local newspaper.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. You wrote a story for your little brother, and he wants to share it with his friends at nursery school. You decide to make it into a picture book.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. For home economics class, you wrote directions for using the new microwave oven. Your teacher asks you to present the directions to two other classes. You decide to get everyone’s attention by presenting your directions in rhyme form.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. Everyone in science class had to do a project for the school science fair. You won a prize and have been asked to present your project and its report to parents at a PTA meeting.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
2 Writing Process in Action

**Key Information**

By working through the steps in the writing process, you can find a topic you will enjoy writing about and produce a work that your readers will enjoy reading.

- **A. Prewriting: Brainstorming**
  For each topic use brainstorming to come up with at least three related ideas.
  1. jokes
  2. creatures that live in water
  3. travel
  4. things people wear on their heads

- **B. Prewriting: Choosing Purpose and Audience**
  Choose one of the ideas above—or combine two—about which you could write a short story. Write a sentence or two describing what your story will be about. Indicate whether the story will be about an actual or imagined event. Name your purpose and your audience.

- **C. Drafting**
  Draft the first paragraph or two of the story you described in Part B. Use additional paper if necessary.

- **D. Revising and Editing/Proofreading**
  Using your original draft in Part C, revise and edit your story. Use proofreader’s marks as needed to make your corrections.
3.1 Writing to Show, Not Tell

**Key Information**

Descriptive details help your readers see, hear, smell, taste, and feel the things you are describing. Details allow your readers to create clear images in their minds.

**A. Using Your Senses**

For each of the following persons, places, or things, think of three details you could use to describe it. Then record the sense to which each detail appeals most strongly.

1. a warm spring day
   - Detail 1: _________________________ Sense: ________________________________
   - Detail 2: _________________________ Sense: ________________________________
   - Detail 3: _________________________ Sense: ________________________________

2. a zoo
   - Detail 1: _________________________ Sense: ________________________________
   - Detail 2: _________________________ Sense: ________________________________
   - Detail 3: _________________________ Sense: ________________________________

3. a busy city street
   - Detail 1: _________________________ Sense: ________________________________
   - Detail 2: _________________________ Sense: ________________________________
   - Detail 3: _________________________ Sense: ________________________________

4. a bus station or airport
   - Detail 1: _________________________ Sense: ________________________________
   - Detail 2: _________________________ Sense: ________________________________
   - Detail 3: _________________________ Sense: ________________________________

**B. Using Details in a Description**

Choose one of the subjects in Part A, and write a descriptive paragraph. Begin with a topic sentence that identifies the main idea. Write a sentence for each of the details you listed. Make sure you appeal to your reader’s senses. Use additional paper if necessary.

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________
3.2 Combining Observation and Imagination

**Key Information**
You use your senses to gain information about the world around you. When you write, you include details your senses have gathered to describe things you know well. These same details can also help you describe things you can only imagine.

A. Describing an Imaginary Creature
Imagine a new creature—one that only you can see. Once you have a clear image of the creature in your mind, describe it. For each sense list at least two details.

**Sight** What does the creature look like? Describe its size, color, shape, or movements.

**Hearing** Does the creature make any sounds? Do the sounds resemble any familiar sounds made by real animals, machines, or people?

**Smell** Do you associate any smells with the creature? Are they pleasant or unpleasant?

**Taste** Does the creature eat anything tasty? Do you taste something in the air when the creature is near?

**Touch** Does the creature have fur? Is it covered with feathers or scaly skin? Use details from real animals or even machines to describe how it feels.

B. Writing a Description
Write a paragraph describing your imaginary creature for a young child. Include at least one detail for each sense.
### 3.3 Choosing Details to Create a Mood

#### Key Information

When you write a description, the details you choose determine how your reader will feel about your subject. Depending on the details you include, you can create a feeling of excitement and happiness or a mood of anxiety and fear. Be aware of the mood you want to create when you decide which details to include.

#### A. Appreciating the Power of Word Choice

Each of the following can be described in different ways. For each item think of details that would help to create the suggested moods.

1. a shopping mall
   - cheerful, happy
   - confusing, unfriendly
2. a museum
   - intriguing, educational
   - mysterious, weird
3. a forest path
   - scary, forbidding
   - peaceful, welcoming

#### B. Creating Moods in Descriptions

Choose one of the settings from Part A, or think of one of your own. Write two short paragraphs, each with a different mood. Include details that make your intended mood clear. Use additional paper if necessary.
3.4 Organizing Details in a Description

Key Information

When you describe something, arrange details in an order that makes sense. Explain where objects are in relation to one another, and lead readers from one thing to the next. In this way you help your readers see a clear and logical mental picture.

A. Using Transition Words and Phrases

Below is a list of transition words and phrases. Your challenge is to use as many of them as you can in describing your classroom. You may also use other, similar words or phrases not on the list. When you are finished, exchange descriptions with a classmate to see how he or she completed the assignment.

behind surrounding  below  leaning against
above  on top of  inside  at the top of
beside  in front of  outside  just before

B. Arranging Details

Decide on the most appropriate way to arrange details to describe an object. For example, if you were describing a tree, would you start from the top and work your way to the roots? Would you do the opposite? Would you start with the trunk and go to the branches? Think of an object to describe. List six details, and then decide on the order of your presentation. Finally, number the details in order.
3.5 Describing a Person

Key Information

How do you get to know people? Usually you see them first. You notice details such as their height, their age, their eyes, and what they are wearing. Very soon you start paying attention to how they act, too. When you write a description to introduce readers to characters, you include details about the same things. You describe not only how the characters look but also how they act.

A. Describing How a Person Looks

Imagine the following kinds of people. Create a picture of each person in your mind, and then list five details to describe how this person looks.

1. a bus driver

2. a toddler with his or her mother at the supermarket

3. an elderly woman doing gardening

4. a waiter at a restaurant

5. a television newscaster

B. Describing How a Person Acts

Choose a person you know well, such as a friend or a family member. Think of five things the person does that would help a stranger understand what kind of person he or she is. Briefly list the details in the space below. Then write a topic sentence for a descriptive paragraph about that person. Your topic sentence should include an adjective that the details will support.
3.6 Relating a Poem to Your Experience

Key Information
A poet shares a thought or experience with the reader through the precise choice of words. Often a poet uses sensory details that you, the reader, can relate to your own experience.

A. Feeling What the Poet Experienced
The image a poet suggests often communicates the poet’s feelings. Read the following stanza from “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and answer the questions that follow.

On the shore, dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe’s haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o’er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning’s first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream:
’Tis the star-spangled banner! Oh long may it wave
O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

1. Upon seeing the flag still flying, the poet expresses relief and joy. What does this detail suggest about the speaker’s attitude toward the flag and the country it represents?

2. Recall a time when you were eager or anxious for something to happen. Was it a stressful time or a calming time? What were you aware of? Describe how you felt.

B. Expressing What You Experience
What emotion or attitude does each of these activities suggest to you? Choose two of them. Write at least three sensory details that indicate whether you enjoy, dislike, fear, or have other feelings about the activity.

swimming  walking in snow/rain  eating radishes/broccoli
washing dishes  touching velvet/leather  hearing traffic sounds

1. Activity: __________________________
   Sensory details: __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

2. Activity: __________________________
   Sensory details: __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
**A. Prewriting: Clustering**

What do you like best to eat? Where? With whom? Under what conditions? For example, would you prefer pizza with a crowd of friends in a pizza parlor blasting rock music, or would you prefer a quiet breakfast at home with your family? Writing a description of your dream meal is more than a simple listing of foods. Copy this cluster diagram on a separate sheet of paper, and add to it all the nouns, adjectives, and adverbs you can think of to describe the experience. Be sure to include details about everything you would see, hear, taste, smell, and touch during your dream meal.

**B. Ordering Information**

Review your cluster diagram. In writing your description, do you want to discuss each topic—such as Food 1, Food 2, and Place—separately, as indicated on the diagram? Or would you use time order, discussing each person or thing as it came on the scene? Perhaps you would choose order of importance, with a description of the main people and things first and the optional ones last. In a sentence or two describe the order you think will work best.

**C. Drafting**

The food editor of your local newspaper has asked readers to write in about their idea of the perfect meal. Choose one of the main ideas you intend to cover. On another sheet of paper, write one paragraph based on your cluster diagram and your organizational plan.
4.1 Telling a Good Story

Key Information

A good story involves these elements: characters that the reader can care about, a plot (series of events) that keeps the reader wanting to see what happens next, and a setting (place and time) that fits well with the characters and the events.

A. Identifying Who, When, and Where

Think of three stories you remember well from books or movies. For each story tell the most important character and the time and place of the action.

1. Title __________________________
   Main Character _______________________
   When ________________________________
   Where ______________________________

2. Title __________________________
   Main Character _______________________
   When ________________________________
   Where ______________________________

3. Title __________________________
   Main Character _______________________
   When ________________________________
   Where ______________________________

B. Determining What Happens

Choose one of the stories above, but change the time and place.

Title __________________________
New Time of Action _______________________
New Place of Action _______________________

Now think about how changing the time and place might affect the main character and the events. Write a paragraph about how the story would change. Use additional paper if necessary.

New Plot __________________________
____________________________________
____________________________________
____________________________________
Developing an Adventure Story

You are planning an exciting adventure full of dangers and narrow escapes. The main character is a student like you, and the setting at the beginning of the story is a town like your own. Choose one of the problems sketched below. Then use the questions that follow to outline your story.

- A master thief thinks that an old cane in the main character’s attic is hollow and holds the key to a treasure chest in a distant land. The main character sees the thief break into the house to steal the cane.
- When a time traveler from the future tries to steal the cat belonging to the main character, he or she learns that in the future there are no cats, and the people of the future want them.

1. What has happened before the story begins? ____________________________________
2. What will happen next . . . and after that . . . and after that? Describe at least three events that lead to the solution. (Some events may make the problem worse.) _______________
3. What is the solution to the problem? __________________________________________

Key Information

Most good stories involve some kind of problem and then show how the characters in the story solve the problem. Various events in the story either make the problem worse or help bring it to an end.

Developing an Adventure Story
4.3 Using Time Order in a Story

Key Information

It is easy for your reader to follow your story if you tell about events in time order, the order in which they occurred. Transition words are a way to show time relationships between events. Some examples are before, after, until, then, next, first, and finally.

A. Using Transition Words

Change the order of the sentences below so that the narrative makes sense. Revise or combine the sentences to make the action clearer. Add any necessary words, including transition words. Copy the sentences in your new order.

Mixed-Up Order

Juan looked up at the night sky. Quickly he turned. He heard footsteps. They hid the moon. They revealed it again. There was George. He stood there, wondering about the darkness of the night. The clouds rolled by. George quietly handed Juan a letter. Juan grabbed George’s arm. George turned to leave. “Is there any message?” Juan inquired desperately.

Revised Order

B. Writing a Series of Events

Think about a possible setting for the event described in the first sentence below. Brainstorm about events that might come before it and others that might come after it. Turn your ideas into a story by completing the other sentences.

Jake barked and woke me up.

Before ____________________________________________

he started growling menacingly.

While ____________________________________________

I turned quickly.

Then ____________________________________________

Much later, ____________________________________________
4.4 Writing Dialogue to Develop Characters

**Key Information**

Dialogue—the exact words that characters say—shows the characters’ personalities. When writing dialogue, have each character say things that suggest what he or she is like. Set off the exact words with quotation marks. You also can describe how the character says the words.

**Putting Words into Characters’ Mouths**

You are writing a story with two characters. Here is what you have planned so far:

A teenage girl is walking along the bank of a creek during a rainstorm. She is lost. Finally she sees a house and stops there for help. An elderly man opens the door, but he doesn’t want to let the girl in. As they talk, the creek suddenly overflows its banks and rushes toward them.

First, think about and describe the personality you want to show for each character.

Now write what the girl and the elderly man say as they meet and as they see their danger. Remember that dialogue should suggest what a character is like.
4.5 Drafting a Story

Key Information

Most writers find it easier to draft a story after they first plan the most important details about plot, characters, and setting. Then, as they draft, they concentrate on one element and bring others into the story as they are needed. Many writers try to write a first draft without pausing to correct punctuation, grammar, or spelling until the draft is complete.

A. Using a Plan

Using the plot, characters, and setting described in the chart, add your own details.

Plot: A kindergarten boy constantly tags after his older brother, who keeps trying to escape him. One day the little boy disappears while trailing his brother, and the older boy has to find him.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Characters: Five-year-old Nelson admires everything his older brother does. Thirteen-year-old Enrique is irritated and embarrassed by Nelson’s attention but is still very concerned about him.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Setting: A high-rise apartment building in a big city

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

B. Drafting Your Story

Now draft a story, using the details from the chart. Use additional paper if necessary.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Writer’s Choice: Composition Practice, Grade 7, Unit 4  29
Improving a Beginning

The story opening below is too slow and wordy. Trim unnecessary details, replace dull words with more powerful ones, change explanation to dialogue, and make any other changes you think will improve it. Mark the original version to keep track of your changes. Then write your revised beginning in the space provided.

It was a dark and stormy night. The wind was so strong that it knocked down branches, and they blew into the house and made scratchy noises where the twigs hit the windows. I had to baby-sit, and I was having all sorts of problems with my little sister and brother because the storm frightened them. They were supposed to go to bed by 8:30, right after the *Gilligan’s Island* rerun, but they wouldn’t cooperate. Danny said there were monsters outside, and June started to cry. And when I yelled at Danny for making June cry, he got angry and went under his bed and wouldn’t come out.

Name ..............................................................................

Class .................................................................

Date ..........................................................
4.7 Responding to a Story

**Key Information**

When you read a story that affects you or excites your imagination, you can choose to respond to it in writing. You can use any form of writing for your response, including poetry, an essay, your own story about the situation or characters in the original story, a letter to a character, or a play telling the story.

**A. Advising a Character**

Choose one of your favorite stories. Imagine that one of its characters decides, during the action, to write to a newspaper for advice. Newspapers have columns on such topics as household repairs, social graces, personal problems, cooking hints, money matters, and travel tips. You might look at a local paper for ideas. Choose a column, and write your character’s letter requesting advice. Briefly explain the character’s dilemma.

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**B. Writing a Response**

Now write the columnist’s reply.
A. Predicting How a Character Would Act

How would one of your favorite characters from books, movies, or television shows react if he or she were a student at your school? Choose a fictional character who appeals to you. Follow him or her through a typical day in your classes. What would the character do and say? Would he or she fit in? How would others react to the character? On another sheet of paper, write details and thoughts about what might happen. Also jot down notes from conversations you might hear on this unusual day.

B. Writing a Story

On your own paper write a story about the chosen character and what happens to him or her during a day at your school. Use the notes, details, and dialogue you developed in Part A.

C. Checking Your Story

Ask a friend to read your draft of the story. Have your friend comment on whether he or she could picture the story events and where more realistic details could be added. You may want the story to be funny. If so, exaggerate the character’s actions and others’ reactions to the character. Revise your story as necessary.

D. Making One More Check

Reread your story. Is it clear and vivid? If you have used dialogue, make sure you have used quotation marks and commas correctly. Also, make sure it is clear who is speaking and when. Check for any errors in grammar and spelling.

E. Publishing/Presenting

You may want to share your story with a friend.
A. Getting Ready to Write

If you were asked to write an explanatory report about each of the following topics, what would you need to know before you started to write? List two questions you would try to answer. Then think of two possible sources for that information.

1. How to program a VCR
   Question 1: ______________________________________________________________
   Question 2: ______________________________________________________________
   Source 1: ______________________________ Source 2: __________________________

2. What life was like in the United States during World War II
   Question 1: ______________________________________________________________
   Question 2: ______________________________________________________________
   Source 1: ______________________________ Source 2: __________________________

3. How your city or town government works
   Question 1: ______________________________________________________________
   Question 2: ______________________________________________________________
   Source 1: ______________________________ Source 2: __________________________

4. A comparison of mountain bikes and racing bicycles
   Question 1: ______________________________________________________________
   Question 2: ______________________________________________________________
   Source 1: ______________________________ Source 2: __________________________

B. Beginning to Write

Choose one of the topics you thought about in Part A. Consult one of the sources you listed and try to find the answers to your questions. If you cannot find the answers consult the other source. Record your answers in the space provided.

Topic you chose: ____________________________________________________________
Answer to question: __________________________________________________________________________
Sources consulted: __________________________________________________________________________
A. Deciding on the Best Order

Read the following topics. Decide on the best way to order information for each topic. Three ways of organizing information are presented below. List the topic under the appropriate organizing method. Then suggest an original topic best suited to each method of organization.

Topics:
- What happened each day of the Battle of Gettysburg
- Reasons why the United States should continue the space program
- A visitor’s guide to the attractions in Yellowstone National Park
- Why everyone should recycle cans and glass
- The story of the Pilgrims’ first winter in America
- A description of items stored in a stockroom

Order in Which Events Happened

Your Topic: ________________________________

Order of Importance

Your Topic: ________________________________

Order of Position or Location

Your Topic: ________________________________

B. Arranging Information in Order

Decide on a topic you know well. First, write a topic sentence introducing your topic to the reader. Then choose one of the orders above, or think of another logical order for your information. Think of at least three details about the topic and number the details in the order that makes the most sense. Use a separate sheet of paper.
5.3 Writing About Similarities and Differences

Key Information
To explain something more clearly, it sometimes helps to compare it or contrast it with something else. When you compare things, you point out the similarities, or likenesses, between them. When you contrast things, you point out the differences between them.

A. Seeing Likenesses and Differences

Think about the following pairs of things. The members of each pair are similar in some ways and different in others. Write down two ways in which they are alike and two ways in which they are different.

1. dog and cat
   Similarities: ______________________________________________________________
   Differences: ______________________________________________________________

2. buses and trains
   Similarities: ______________________________________________________________
   Differences: ______________________________________________________________

3. newspapers and magazines
   Similarities: ______________________________________________________________
   Differences: ______________________________________________________________

4. television and radio
   Similarities: ______________________________________________________________
   Differences: ______________________________________________________________

5. a tree and a bush
   Similarities: ______________________________________________________________
   Differences: ______________________________________________________________

B. Writing a Comparison or a Contrast

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph comparing or contrasting two things. Begin with a topic sentence that explains whether you see these things as more alike or more different. Include at least two supporting details. You may refer to Part A for ideas for your topic.
A. Analyzing a Process

You may not realize it, but you follow many sequences, or series, of steps when you perform familiar daily tasks. List at least three steps that are involved in the following familiar processes. Write the steps in the correct order.

1. Checking a book out of the library: ___________________________________________
2. Preparing a salad: _________________________________________________________
3. Seeing a movie at the theater: ______________________________________________
4. Brushing your teeth: _______________________________________________________

B. Writing About a Process

Write an explanation of one of the processes in Part A. Select an audience for the topic. Be sure to use transition words such as first, next, then, while, and finally to help your readers follow the sequence of the steps. Use additional paper if necessary.

Topic:____________________________________________________________________
Audience: __________________________________________________________________
Explanation: ________________________________________________________________
Key Information
A cause is an identifiable condition or event. An effect is something that happens as a direct result of the condition or event. When you write, be sure that you accurately identify cause and effect.

A. Seeing Possible Effects
Each of the following events could be the cause of something else happening. For each cause, write a possible effect.

1. Lightning strikes an electrical power station.
   Effect:___________________________________________________________________
2. The musical group practices every night before the concert.
   Effect:___________________________________________________________________
3. The store advertises a 50-percent-off sale on popular shoes.
   Effect:___________________________________________________________________
4. The football team loses its star quarterback.
   Effect:___________________________________________________________________
5. Bus fares increase by 50 cents today.
   Effect:___________________________________________________________________
6. Rainfall has been well below average for three straight years.
   Effect:___________________________________________________________________

B. Writing About Cause and Effect
Your family has planned a reunion picnic today, but you wake up to a steady downpour of rain. Write a paragraph explaining at least two possible effects the rain can have on your day. Make sure that the rain is the cause of what happens next.
A. Narrowing Topics

Read the broad topics listed below. For each broad topic think of four narrower, more specific, topics. Write them on the lines.

1. Forms of transportation _______________________ _____________________
   _______________________ _____________________

2. Events in the news _______________________ _____________________
   _______________________ _____________________

3. Popular pets _______________________ _____________________
   _______________________ _____________________

4. Occupations _______________________ _____________________
   _______________________ _____________________

5. Pop music _______________________ _____________________
   _______________________ _____________________

B. Narrowing a Topic Further

Choose one of the narrowed topics you wrote in Part A. Narrow it even further. Think of two possible topics that are even more specific than the first one. These topics should be aimed at particular audiences.

First Topic: ______________________________________________________________

Narrower Topic 1: ________________________________________________________

Audience: _______________________________________________________________

Narrower Topic 2: ________________________________________________________

Audience: _______________________________________________________________
**Reports: Turning to Helpful Sources**

**Key Information**

Research reports should present accurate details about a topic. Before you begin to write a report, you need to gather details from a variety of sources. To be sure you will remember the details correctly, you need to take good notes.

**A. Locating Sources**

Visit the school or local library. Find a book or an encyclopedia article from which you can gather information on each of these topics. For each book write down the title and the author. For each encyclopedia article, write down the title of the encyclopedia, the volume number, and the pages of the article.

1. Solar energy
   - Book title: _______________________________________________________________
   - Encyclopedia article: _______________________________________________________

2. The art of quilting
   - Book title: _______________________________________________________________
   - Encyclopedia article: _______________________________________________________

3. The Great Pyramid of Egypt
   - Book title: _______________________________________________________________
   - Encyclopedia article: _______________________________________________________

4. The life of Maria Tallchief
   - Book title: _______________________________________________________________
   - Encyclopedia article: _______________________________________________________

5. Any topic that interests you: _______________________________________________
   - Book title: _______________________________________________________________
   - Encyclopedia article: _______________________________________________________

**B. Taking Notes**

For one of the topics listed in Part A, find a piece of information that you can use in a report. Create a sample note card on another sheet of paper or on an index card. Begin with the topic you are researching. Include the source’s title, publication date, and name of author. Be sure to write your notes in your own words. Copying other people’s words exactly without giving them credit is unfair and illegal.
**A. Interviewing an Expert**

Imagine you are preparing a report on a health or fitness issue. Plan an interview with a doctor, a nurse, or another medical professional. Write six questions that you would ask that person.

1. _________________________________________________________________________
2. _________________________________________________________________________
3. _________________________________________________________________________
4. _________________________________________________________________________
5. _________________________________________________________________________
6. _________________________________________________________________________

**B. Writing About an Interview**

Ask a friend to pretend he or she is a medical professional while you conduct an interview. Use your questions from Part A. Now write a paragraph reporting on the interview. Begin with a topic sentence that lets readers know that your interviewee is an expert in the area of your chosen topic. Imagine that you are writing this report for the school newspaper.
A. Writing a Thesis Statement

Write a possible thesis statement for each of the following topics. Remember that a thesis statement tells what you want to show, prove, or explain about the topic.

1. Endangered species

2. Special effects in movies

3. School assemblies

4. Your home town

B. Writing an Introduction

Choose one of the topics in Part A. Write an introduction that will catch the reader’s interest. Your introduction should also show where you stand on the topic. Do you find the topic complex or interesting? Does the topic remind you of an issue you feel strongly about? Do you know much about a certain aspect of the topic? Write your introduction in the space provided.
5.10 Reports: Revising and Presenting

Key Information

After your report is written, look it over as if you were reading it for the first time. Remember that inaccurate statistics and details can ruin your report. Unclear or boring writing can cause your readers to become confused or make them lose interest. When you are satisfied that your report is the best work you can do, share it with others in an attractive form.

A. Revising a Report

Below are notes and a body paragraph of a report that was written from them. Check the paragraph for accuracy. Make sure all details are correct and all quotations are accurate. Mark any changes.

Notes:

- Graduated from University of Texas in 1968
- Taught in Germany for two years
- Has taught grades 3, 4, and 5
- Knows three languages—English, Spanish, and a little German
- Is volunteering to tutor students after school

Paragraph:

Mrs. Garcia has dedicated her life to the profession she loves. After graduating from the University of Tennessee in 1969, she taught in Germany for three years. There she learned her third language—German. She also speaks French and English. Mrs. Garcia has taught many grades including first, second, third, and fourth grades. This fine educator is now volunteering her free time to tutor students after school.

B. Writing the Final Draft

Rewrite the paragraph you revised above. Make sure that all the changes you noted in revising are included.
5.11 Comparing Two People

Key Information
Characters you read about, either fictional or real, can be compared and contrasted to other characters. You can use details from your reading to spot similarities and differences between characters.

A. Looking for Similarities and Differences
Read the following paragraphs. Then fill in the Venn diagram to show how Soda and Darry are alike and how they are different.

Soda . . . never cracks a book at all, and my oldest brother, Darrel, who we call Darry, works too long and hard to be interested in a story or drawing a picture. . . .

Soda tries to understand, at least, which is more than Darry does. But then, Soda understands everything, almost. Like he’s never hollering at me all the time the way Darry is, or treating me as if I was six instead of fourteen. I love Soda more than I’ve ever loved anyone, even Mom and Dad. He’s always happy-go-lucky and grinning, while Darry’s hard and firm and rarely grins at all.

S. E. Hinton, The Outsiders

B. Writing a Comparison-and-Contrast Paragraph
Write a paragraph comparing and contrasting the characters you read about in Part A. Begin with a topic sentence that tells which character you would rather have as a friend.
A. Prewriting: Selecting and Narrowing a Topic

Science is a part of our daily lives. The many aspects of science include the study of weather, rocks, stars and planets, animals, and plants. Think about these branches of science, and narrow each topic until it can be covered in a short research report. Then think of one adjective for each topic that could start your ideas flowing.

Weather
Narrowed Topic: ________________________________
Adjective: ________________________________

Rocks
Narrowed Topic: ________________________________
Adjective: ________________________________

Stars and Planets
Narrowed Topic: ________________________________
Adjective: ________________________________

Animals
Narrowed Topic: ________________________________
Adjective: ________________________________

Plants
Narrowed Topic: ________________________________
Adjective: ________________________________

B. Drafting an Introduction

Choose one of the topics you thought about in Part A. Keeping the guiding adjective in mind, write an introduction that lets readers know your attitude toward your topic and gives readers an idea of the type of information you will be presenting.
6.1 Using Persuasive Writing

Key Information
Persuasive writing tries to get readers to agree with a certain opinion and often to take action supporting that opinion. The writer selects words that are likely to affect the reader’s feelings about a subject. Persuasive writing appears in many forms, such as magazine ads, radio announcements, and newspaper editorials.

A. Selecting Effective Words
For each of the following situations, write at least three words that might be persuasive.

1. In a poster to sell your old bike, you want to stress how rugged it is.

2. In an election speech you want to ask your classmates to vote for you as class treasurer because you are good at keeping track of money and finding things at good prices.

3. In a letter to the editor asking for contributions to a pet shelter, you want readers to think about how much their own pets mean to them.

4. In a separate letter supporting the pet shelter, you want to stress the helplessness of abandoned puppies and kittens.

5. You plan to distribute a flyer asking that neighborhood residents write letters to City Hall demanding a traffic light at a nearby intersection. You want to stress how dangerous the intersection is.

B. Writing a Persuasive Paragraph
Select a situation described in Part A. Write a paragraph to persuade readers to share your opinion and to take the desired action. Use the persuasive words you wrote for Part A.
6.2 Forming an Opinion

Key Information
In persuasive writing you should choose a topic important to you. The following questions will help you identify a valuable topic for persuasive writing: Is this a topic about which I feel strongly? Is this a topic that has more than one side? Is it one on which people disagree? Could I say enough to persuade others to accept my position?

A. Looking at Both Sides

Read the following statement:

We could solve traffic problems by using tax money to support an excellent bus system charging low fares.

Now work with a partner to complete these three steps:

1. Decide which of you will support the above statement and which will oppose it. Circle your choice, For or Against, over the left column.

2. In the left column write at least three reasons to support your side of the issue.

   For / Against
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________

3. Exchange papers. Next to each reason your partner listed in the left column, write an answer in the right column. You may use reasons you listed on your sheet if they are appropriate. Otherwise, you must come up with additional reasons. When both of you have finished, take back your own papers.

B. Choosing Sides

Review the reasons on both sides of the issue in Part A. Check off the three strongest reasons for supporting either side. Which side could you write about more effectively? Why?
6.3 Gathering Evidence

Key Information

In persuasive writing you can back up your position with different kinds of evidence: facts, statistics, examples, opinions, and reasons. The choice depends on your audience and purpose.

A. Recognizing Types of Evidence

Decide which type of evidence is illustrated by each example. Write fact, statistic, example, opinion, or reason.

1. To prove what a danger deer can be, let me tell you about my cousin in New Hampshire who barely missed hitting a deer with his car._________________________ 

2. Computers work very quickly. If you use this computer program, you may speed up your record keeping. ____________________________

3. In 1992 the youth center began to offer courses in baby-sitting and bike safety. ______

4. A total of 63 percent of our customers preferred the new store hours. ______________ 

5. Tall people watching parades should let short people stand in front.__________________

B. Selecting Types of Evidence

Of the five types of evidence, name one or two that you would use to persuade your audience in each situation below. Explain why you would choose that type.

1. You want a part-time job at a neighborhood store, but your parents think that you’re too young and that your studies will suffer. You must ask your parents for permission.

   ____________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________

2. You are on a school committee responsible for bringing in speakers on various careers. You want to invite the administrator of an area hospital but are afraid she will be too busy to come.

   ____________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________

C. Developing Evidence

Choose one situation described in Part B. State your position, and write two statements you could use to support it.

Position: ___________________________________________________________________

Evidence: __________________________________________________________________
A. Turning a Problem into Persuasion

The paragraph below describes a problem. Follow the directions to change it into a piece of persuasive writing.

My grandmother had a stroke a few months ago. Now she has trouble walking, and sometimes her hands shake so badly that she drops things. She’s in a nursing home, but she wants to be on her own more. Since she can’t cook or shop, she doesn’t want to live alone in her house. She thinks she’ll be in the way if she lives with us or my cousins. She’s looking for a group home or apartment building where she can have her own rooms but join other people for meals. With staff members nearby, she could get help if she needed it. She’s called several group homes, but none of them have openings.

1. Many people face the problem described. State an opinion that people in the community might have about the situation.

2. Can you think of any ways to solve this problem? Suggest a solution.

3. What specific action could you ask your readers to take?

B. Writing a Topic Sentence

Think of how you would revise the paragraph in Part A to change it into persuasive writing. Using one of the ideas you suggested in Part A, write a topic sentence for the revised paragraph. The topic sentence will come first in the paragraph.

C. Writing a Persuasive Paragraph

Now write your persuasive paragraph, using a separate sheet of paper. Be sure to move from introduction to evidence (example) to conclusion.
I. A. Grabbing Attention
Rewrite each opening sentence to make it more likely to get attention.

1. There should be more buses on the route that serves the school.

2. In the contest for school mascot, vote for the hawk.

3. The movies should give more roles to minorities.

4. July is the most boring month.

5. Any restaurant that offers a buffet should put the buffet in the nonsmoking section.

I. B. Keeping Attention
In the paragraph below replace at least three dull words or phrases with stronger, more vivid ones. Rearrange the details for greater impact.

The only good thing you can say about February is that it isn’t very long. The skies are usually gray, and by then the snow is dirty and gray. There aren’t any big holidays to break up the boredom.
A. Assembling the Information

You and your friends have formed a rock band that will play in public for the first time at a block party in late summer. You need to write an announcement for the community newsletter. Use these questions to identify what you will include.

1. Who will be most interested in hearing your band play? ____________________________

2. Who else might be persuaded to come? _______________________________________

3. What qualities of your group, music, or staging might appeal to each audience? _______

   How can you describe your group in a way that grabs interest?______________________

4. What information will your audience need about time and place? ___________________

B. Writing the Announcement

Write an announcement about your band’s appearance at the block party, using the facts and ideas in Part A. Keep your audience in mind, including anything that will catch their interest and persuade them to come. Try to choose words and images that fit the event.

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Key Information

When you write publicity, you must include all the necessary information about an event, product, or campaign. You should present this information in an attractive way to persuade people to attend the event, buy the product, or support your candidate or cause. Publicity can take such forms as flyers, posters, and radio and newspaper ads.
Asking for Action

In your history class you and your classmates have enjoyed a computer game called *Time Warp*, but when you reach a certain level of play, the program always crashes. Write a letter of complaint to the software company, Fun’n Games, located at 14 Main Street in your town. Clearly state the problem and what you feel is an acceptable solution. If you need help with business-letter form, refer to *Writer’s Choice*, page 287.

Dear __________________________:

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Dear __________________________:

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6.8 Writing a Movie Review

Key Information

The writer of a movie review does more than state a personal opinion about the movie. The reviewer describes and evaluates specific elements, such as characters, plot, acting, and visual effects. An effective movie review helps readers decide whether or not to see the movie.

A. Looking at the Parts

Select a movie you have seen recently, at the theater or on television. Use the following questions to focus on its elements.

Movie Title: _________________________________________________________________

Characters: Identify the most important characters in the story. Which characters seemed like real people? Why? _____________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Plot: Briefly discuss the major action in the movie. For example, was the character pitted against an enemy? Was the plot a string of funny events? _________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Acting: Did each actor move and talk and look as the character would? Did the actor seem too serious for a funny role or too silly for a serious role? _________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Visual Effects: If the movie was set in a different time period or in a special part of the world, did the scenery reflect that time or place accurately? If the movie used special effects to suggest such things as space battles or erupting volcanoes, did it make you believe, for the moment, that you were seeing those things?

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

B. Writing a Review

Write a review of the movie you analyzed in Part A. Organize your review according to the four elements you have analyzed. Feel free to discuss any additional elements unique to that movie. Use another sheet of paper.
6 Writing Process in Action

Key Information

The purpose of persuasive writing is to swing readers over to your way of thinking. Even though you may feel strongly about your topic, you must base your argument on more than your own feelings. Persuasive writing must include evidence. In other words, you need to use reasons, facts, statistics, examples, and the opinions of others to support your position.

A. Prewriting: Selecting a Topic

We often feel most strongly about issues that affect everyday life. Since you spend several hours in school every day, you probably have opinions about school issues. For example, do you think that the school should schedule more programs and assemblies? Do you feel the dress code is fair? Would you like to see more magazines about your sport or hobby in the library?

List four issues you feel are facing your school today. Write a sentence that expresses your opinion about each issue.

Issue 1: ____________________________________________

Issue 2: ____________________________________________

Issue 3: ____________________________________________

Issue 4: ____________________________________________

B. Drafting: Writing Persuasively

Write a persuasive essay about one of the issues you listed in Part A. Choose the one that you care the most about. Before you begin to write, assemble all your evidence. Then organize your evidence, and draft your persuasive essay below. Use additional paper if necessary.