

Unit 3: Writing—Making Words Speak

Overview

Writing has been a part of your life for a long time; for most of you, since you began school. Since then, you have learned more each year. This unit will help you improve the skills you have. It will also help you to build new writing skills.



Writing has been a part of your life for a long time.

The unit begins with a guide to prewriting, the steps you take to plan a writing project.

Prewriting is important to a successful project. It helps you lay a solid foundation for your draft.

You will be given strategies for prewriting, and you will practice choosing a topic. You will also be given ideas for collecting information and for organizing this information.

You will also learn about writing for an audience. The unit offers strategies for shaping your writing for specific readers.

The unit continues with a focus on paragraph writing and will help you become familiar with the parts of the paragraph. You will learn about the different ways to organize a paragraph and the different types of paragraphs.

You will write first drafts of several paragraphs and use these drafts as you work through the next unit. Please save all your drafts, you will need them in Unit 4. The steps and skills included in this process will be helpful. You can use them anytime you need to write anything. You can use them for any topic or subject.

Prewriting: Sharpening Your Point and Gathering Materials

The first step in the writing process is selecting the writing **topic**. Often, you will be given a general *topic*. For instance, your social studies teacher may assign you to write an essay on the city in which you live. Let's call your city Dynamotown. First, you will list what you knew about Dynamotown. You know that it was founded about 200 years ago by English settlers. You also know that it is surrounded by water. Other than that, you know little about your city. You are ready to begin your research.

As you begin to collect information on Dynamotown, you realize this topic is very broad. It would take many books to hold everything there is to say about this city. Of course, there is the 200-year history of your city—exactly when and how it was founded. There is the geography of Dynamotown, including its waterways and climate. There is the government—whether Dynamotown has an elected mayor or a city manager. The list goes on and on.



You may find you have too much information on Dynamotown.

You find you have too much information. You must then narrow this topic—the city of Dynamotown. You need to create a **useful topic**. A *useful topic* narrows your focus to a specific part of the general topic. A limited—useful—topic provides you with something specific to research, think about, and then write about.

Imagine that during your reading on Dynamotown, you made an amazing discovery.

- You found that much of Dynamotown was once under a wide river.
- At the beginning of the 20th century, dikes were built to narrow the river.
- These dikes doubled the size of Dynamotown. Imagine, where your house now stands there was once nothing but water!

You decide to research how and why these dikes were built. You have successfully narrowed your topic.

You began with a broad subject—the city of Dynamotown, your home city. You then narrowed this to a useful topic—how and why the dikes surrounding the city were built.

1. You used the information you gathered.
2. You used what you already knew.
3. You found a topic that interested you.

Gathering Information

Carolina recently completed an essay. She was asked to describe a pleasant memory with her favorite relative. Carolina wrote about making a Christmas piñata with her sisters and brothers when she was five years

Carolina wrote about making a Christmas piñata with her sisters and brothers when she was five years old.



old. Carolina knew all the **details** herself. She did not have to research her topic because she was relating a personal experience. You will often be asked to write about personal experiences. Like Carolina, you will already know exactly what to say.

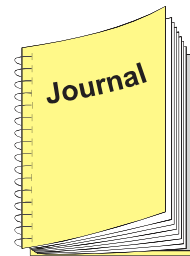
For other assignments, you will know very little. You will need to gather *details*. This involves collecting information and planning how you will use the details that you find. You will gather information for research papers, reports, essays, and articles.

The following three steps will help you gather details.

Collecting Your Thoughts

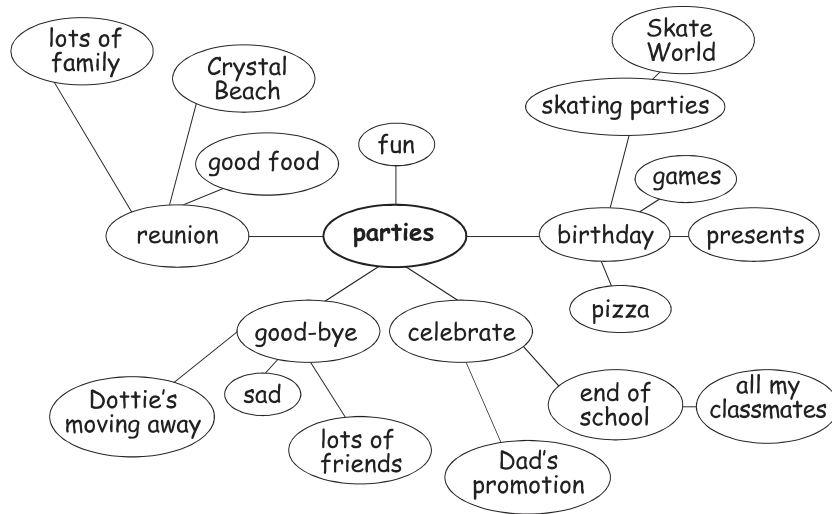
Think about your topic: What do you actually know? Often, you will be surprised. You sometimes know much more than you think you know. Other times, you know very little. Use the following strategies to help organize your ideas.

- **Keeping a Journal:** Each week write in a personal journal. Write about what you do each day. Write about how you feel. Reread these entries. Underline ideas you would like to write more about. Add any new ideas that come to mind as you read these entries.
- **Clustering or Webbing:** Think of your topic. Choose a focus word. This should be a general word that relates to your assignment. Write down the focus word. Then think of other related words and phrases. Cluster these related words and phrases as in the Cluster or Web Model on the following page.



Each week write in a personal journal.

As you can see below, *clustering or webbing* is an excellent way to organize information. Clustering helps you to picture how words and phrases connect to a topic.



Cluster or Web Model

Cluster words for about five minutes. Scan your cluster. Are any terms similar? If so, can you group them under one word? As you look over your cluster, can you think of other words to add? If so, add them. You will probably find several possible topics.

- **Listing:** Think of your topic. Write down details you already know. Write down any questions you have. Add as many details as you can.
- **Freewriting:** Begin writing with your topic in mind. Write nonstop for five to 10 minutes. Look back over your writing. Underline any ideas you would like to develop.



Write down details you already know.

- **Analyzing:** Ask the following types of questions about your topic:
 1. What parts does it have?
 2. How does it look, sound, or feel?
 3. What is it like? What is it not like?
 4. What can I do with it?
 5. What is good about it? What is bad?
- **Asking the 5W-How Questions:** Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? Answering these questions will give you basic information. This will also help you go from a broad **subject** to a specific topic.

Researching

At one time, researching meant reading. It still includes reading. However, researching now means much more. It now also includes watching videos, digital versatile discs (DVDs), and television programs. It also includes listening to tapes or compact discs (CDs) about your topic. Surfing the Internet will also provide a wealth of information. (See Unit 1.)

Researching also includes making notes. Once you have good notes, you can organize the information. Good notes lead to good organization. This, in turn, leads to a well-written paper.

Good notes should be readable. They should also include all important information about your topic. Finally, they should be as brief as possible. Use the following tips when taking notes.



Once you have good notes, you can organize the information.

- Reread material before making notes. Read a selection the first time to get an idea of its contents. Read it a second time for more specific information.
- Keep your topic in mind. Select only information that relates to that topic. Do not write down everything there is to write.
- Write complete sentences only if you want to use a quotation. If you are going to quote the sentence, you must give credit to the source. Remember to write down
 1. the author's name
 2. title of the book
 3. publishing company
 4. city of publication
 5. date of publication
 6. page number(s) where quote is found.

If you are quoting an Internet or electronic reference you must also give credit to the source. See Unit 1 pages 45-47 for the information you should obtain to give credit to the source.

Most of your research will come from nonfiction materials. These nonfiction materials are usually written in common patterns. Knowing these patterns can help you take notes.

Common Patterns of Nonfiction Writing

Description

The following selection describes the creation of men taken from Greek mythology. This essay follows the description pattern. It opens with a general description of man's creation. Then, it continues to describe two of the different races of men created by the gods.

Greek Mythology—The Creation of Humankind

Greek mythology offers several accounts of how human beings were created. All of these accounts have certain things in common. In each, the gods were responsible for humankind's creation. Also, each version tells of how humans devolved from near gods to very imperfect creatures. One of the most famous accounts is told by the writer Hesiod. His version of the myth included five different races of mortals. A description of the first two illustrates how the race declined.

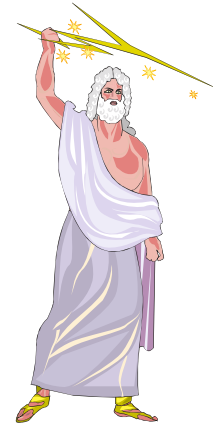
Hesiod tells us the first race was a race of golden mortals. They lived very much like the Olympian gods. These mortals lived together without war or sickness. They then died peacefully in their sleep without pain. These men and women honored and loved the gods. They, in turn, were loved and blessed by the gods. However, this race disappeared from the earth, but not completely.



Each version tells of how humans devolved from near gods to very imperfect creatures.

They still exist as spirits and the protectors of mortal humans. These beings still receive great honor from gods and humans alike.

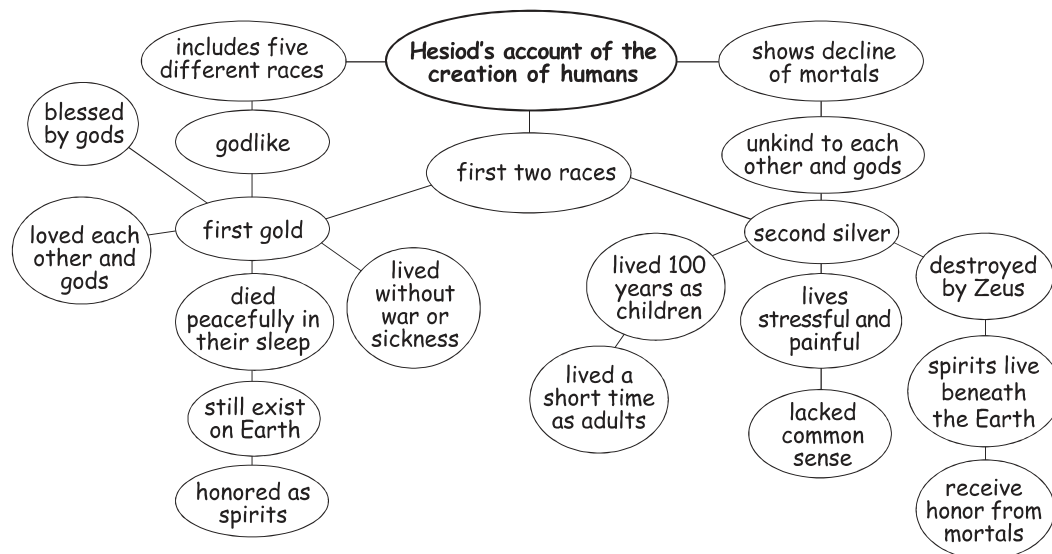
The gods then created a silver race of beings. Children were reared by their mothers for 100 years, and they played as babies. When they grew up, they lived only a short time. Their lives were stressful and painful, largely because they lacked common sense. These men and women were unkind to each other and arrogant. They did not worship the gods or make proper sacrifices to them. They angered Zeus, who hid them away until they disappeared from the Earth. The spirits of these mortals live under the Earth. Despite their shortcomings, they are honored by living mortals.



The silver race of beings angered Zeus.

One of the best ways to organize important information from a description is with a cluster or web. *Clustering or webbing* is creating a graphic organizer that pictures a plan for arranging information. Clustering words and phrases around a central topic to show how they connect to a topic. Look at the following example of the cluster (web) for “Greek Mythology—The Creation of Humankind.”

Cluster or Web Model of Greek Mythology—The Creation of Humankind



First: center topic in cluster or web.
Then: write important details on the arms of cluster or web.

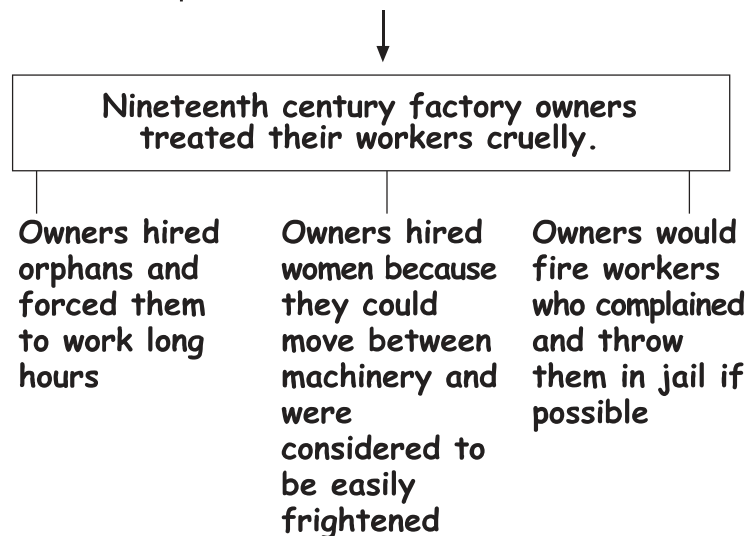
Main Idea and Supporting Details

The information in the article below follows the **main idea** and **supporting details** pattern. The first two sentences introduce the topic and the *main idea*. The following sentences support the main idea.

A Shameful History

We often hear today about unfair treatment of workers by factory owners and supervisors. However, these instances usually cannot compare to the cruelty shown to 19th century workers. Often, during this time, the owners of factories and mills hired young orphans. They would then force these children to work 15 hours a day. There are stories of employers chaining children to their machines because the employers did not want them moving about too much. Many factory owners preferred to hire women but not because they believed in equal rights. Women were smaller than men and could move easily among the machinery. They were considered more timid and easily frightened if they were threatened with losing their jobs. Any worker who complained about the hours or working conditions was fired. Whenever possible, the employer would make sure the trouble-making worker was thrown into jail.

The top of the table states the main idea.

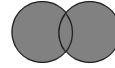


The table “legs” list supporting details.

Comparison and Contrast

The information below compares two decades in American History. The first paragraph points out similarities between the 1920s and the 1960s. The remaining paragraphs deal with the differences.

Compare and Contrast



Our Rebellious Grannies

In the 1960s, several feminist writers pointed out that their decade bore a strong similarity to the Roaring Twenties. They pointed out how young women of both decades were rebellious. These individuals refused to accept the traditional image of women society held for many years. They redefined female morality and fashion. They also rejected their parents' beliefs in traditional women's roles. Instead, these young women wanted more equality with men.

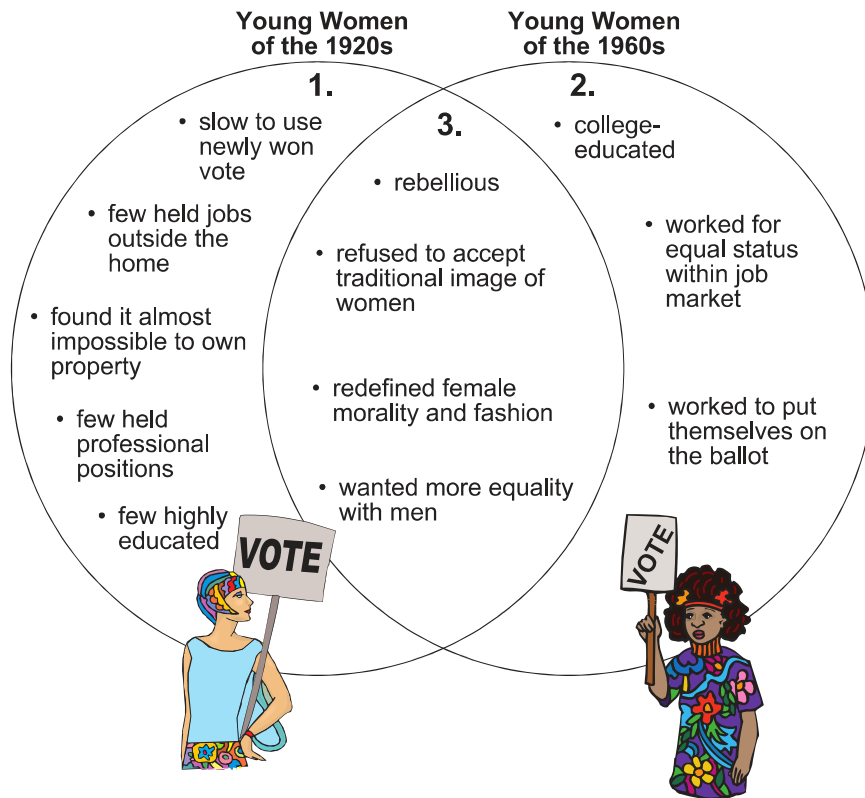


However, certain differences do remain between the decades. Young women in the 1920s were breaking completely new ground. Their attempts at rebellion did not greatly change things for many years. They did, after much work, gain the right to vote in 1920. However, it took years for many of them to actually do this. Also, few women had jobs outside the home. Most found it almost impossible to own property in their own names. Only a handful of professional positions were filled by women.

This was probably because so few women completed their education beyond high school, if that. The rebellious young women of the 1960s were, for the most part, college-educated. They worked to gain equal status within the professional job market that had been completely closed to their grandmothers. While their grandmothers had marched for the right to vote, these women worked to put themselves on the ballot.

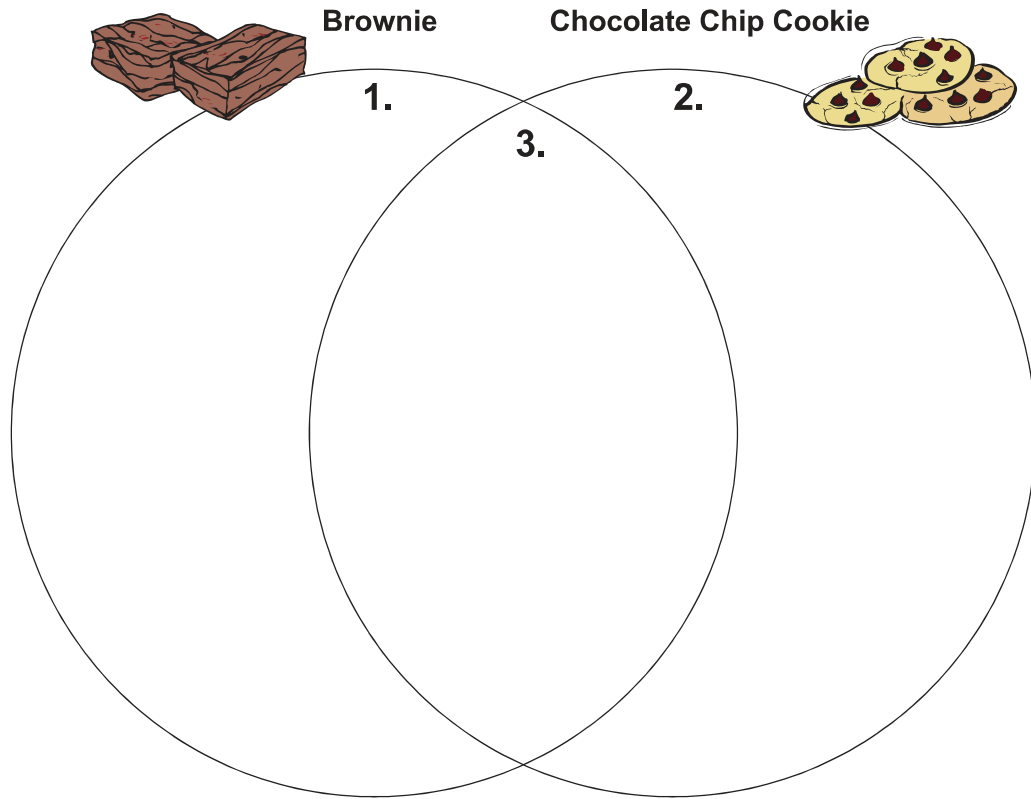
A Venn diagram is useful in organizing information that shows how two things are alike and different. See the Venn diagram below.

Our Rebellious Grannies Young Women of the 1920s and the 1960s



Areas 1 and 2 list details showing how subjects are different.
Area 3 lists details shared by subjects.

Chocolate, Anyone?



Areas 1 and 2 list details showing how subjects are different.
Area 3 lists details shared by subjects.

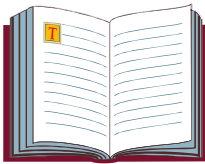
Chronological Order

The following information provides details in *chronological order*. Chronological order means that the details are listed in *time order*. The selection discusses the history of the Nancy Drew mystery books. Some of you may be familiar with these books. More than likely your mothers will be. Your grandmothers will almost certainly be familiar with Nancy Drew.

Nancy Drew: A Heroine for All Seasons

In March of 2004 an American tradition was reborn. Publisher Simon & Schuster launched a new *Nancy Drew: Girl Detective* series of books. To thousands of mothers, grandmothers, and even great-grandmothers, this was good news. Reading Nancy Drew mysteries has been a part of growing up for American girls for over 72 years. As these years passed and the country changed, so did the character of Nancy.

The first Nancy Drew mystery was published in 1929. This novel, *The Secret of the Old Clock*, was written by Mildred A. Wirt. Ms. Wirt wrote 23 of the first 30 books in the series. However, she was not credited as the author. She wrote for Stratemeyer Syndicate, who published this and all following novels under the name of author Carolyn Keene. This Nancy was different from the "namby-pamby" girl characters seen in most girls' books of the time. She was strong-willed and independent, much like the "new woman" of the "Roaring Twenties."



These mysteries, which appeared through the 1930s and 1940s, were illustrated by Russell H. Tandy. He portrayed Nancy as bright and adventurous. She was sophisticated and glamorous, reflecting the sophistication and glamour of the time period. He drew his last cover in 1949.

In 1950, a different Nancy appeared. Illustrator Bill Gillies created this version. This Nancy was less sophisticated and more innocent than the first.

This reflected post-World War II America's attempt to restore the country to simpler, more innocent times.

Within the next 20 years, entertainment interests shifted. Young people became more interested in television than in reading. To respond to this, in 1977, Nancy Drew appeared on television with the Hardy Boys in a weekly mystery hour. However, the mystery books were still published and were still best sellers.

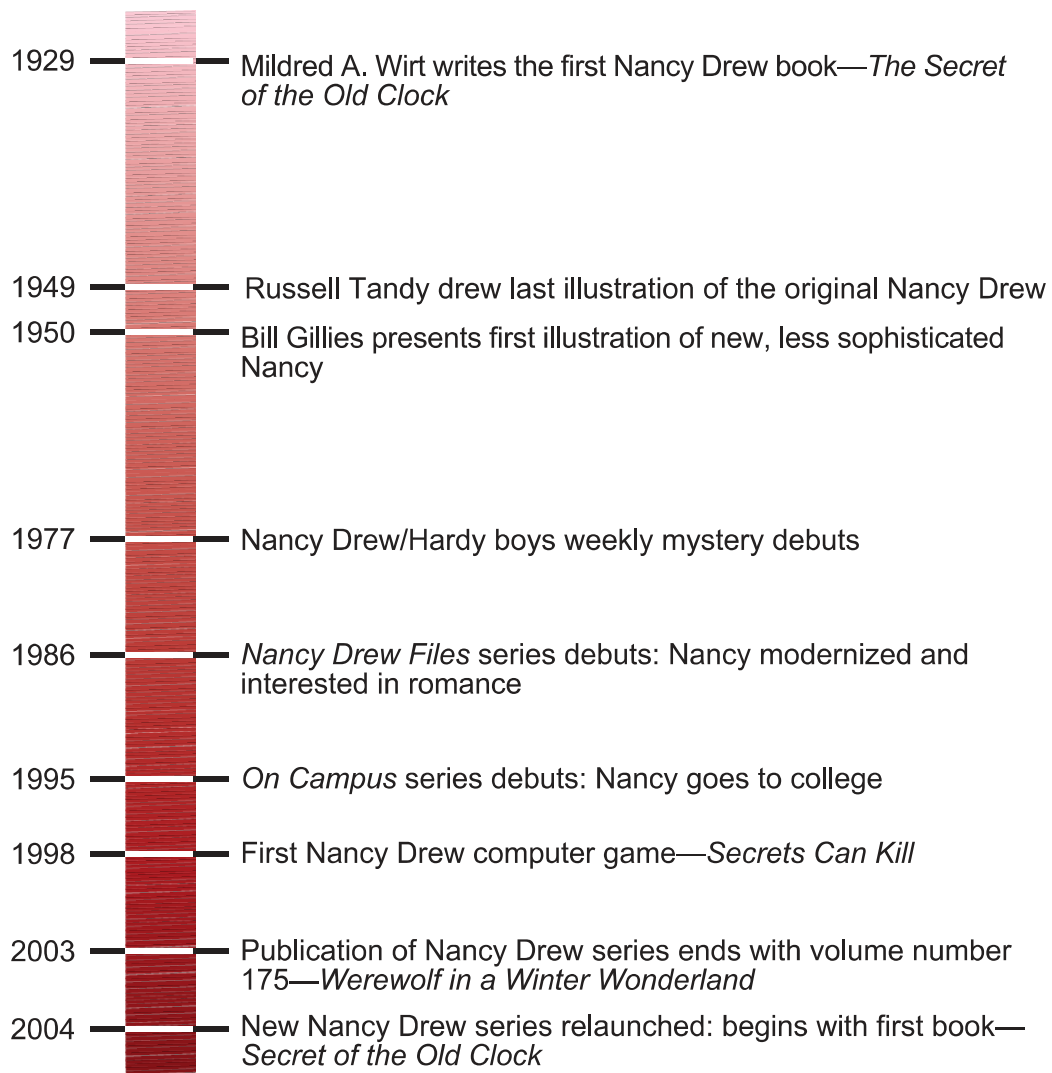
Nancy herself underwent more change in the 1980s and 1990s. The *Nancy Drew Files* series was launched in 1986. In these, Nancy's image was modernized, and she was more interested in romance. In 1995, the *On Campus* series debuted, sending Nancy (finally!) off to college. Inevitably, Nancy entered the computer age in 1998 with the release of the first Nancy Drew computer game, *Secrets Can Kill*.

The year 2003 saw a historic end as the Nancy Drew Mystery Stories series ended. Volume number 175, *Werewolf in a Winter Wonderland*, was published in November of that year, the last to be published since the series began in 1929.

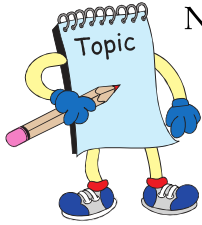
However, you can't keep a good girl down. In March of 2004, the new *Nancy Drew Girl Detective* series debuted. The series began with the reintroduction of the first episode, *The Secret of the Old Clock*. This will allow a new generation of readers to collect their Nancies from the beginning. These books offer richer description and a 21st century heroine. Once again, Nancy Drew has changed as her readers have changed.

A timeline will help you organize details given in chronological order. See the example on the following page.

Timeline of the Nancy Drew Mysteries



Evaluating Details



Now your research is finished. You have taken notes on your topic. You have also organized these notes. You probably have more information than you need. Now you need to choose details. You need to write your paper.

Look back over your initial **Inventory Chart** on page 168.

Did you find the answers to your questions? Did you find the details you needed? If so, write these details on your new **Research Inventory Chart** on the following page. Put them in the “What I Learned” column. Make sure to write down where you found each fact.

Take another look at your new **Research Inventory Chart** on the following page. Do you have *enough* information to write your paper? If you do, you are ready to begin. If not, you will need to do *more* research.

Writing for an Audience: Tailoring Your Words and Content to Fit Readers

Writing is communication. Sometimes, however, language gets in the way. In order to communicate, you must choose words your **audience** can understand. Have you ever had a situation like the following?

Tara's uncle was visiting with her family over the holidays. Her Uncle Nathan teaches English Literature at a very respected college in the East. The two of them get along well, and they enjoy many of the same interests.

At dinner, Tara mentioned that her favorite band was currently touring the Southeast. They would be playing in 53 cities in the next 65 days.

Uncle Nathan, who enjoys the band's music, replied, "I am sure those peripatetic¹ buskers² will acquire much erudition³ about many geographic locales⁴ in their various sojourns⁵."

Needless to say, Tara had no idea what her Uncle Nathan was saying. Uncle Nathan had forgotten that he was speaking to his 14-year-old niece at a family dinner. He was not lecturing to his graduate students or talking with his fellow professors.

Uncle Nathan missed one of the most important points about communication. He failed to change his words to suit his *audience*.

Had Uncle Nathan done this, his might have said, "Those musicians sure do travel a lot! I'll bet they learn all kinds of things about the different places they visit."

Those musicians sure do travel a lot! I'll bet they learn all kinds of things about the different places they visit.



¹ *peripatetic*—traveling

² *buskers*—musicians

³ *erudition*—knowledge; learning

⁴ *locales*—places

⁵ *sojourns*—travels; journeys

You adjust your words to your audience every day when you speak. You use a different set of words with your friends than with your teachers. You probably do this without thinking. You need to do the same thing when you write. You need to change your words as your reader changes.

Communication involves more than using the right words for your audience. You must also include the right amount of information for the reader as well. An incident between Tara and Uncle Nathan on the following day shows this. This time, Tara forgot her audience.

Tara's violin recital was to be held after school. Since the performing group was small, the event was to be held at her teacher's home. Uncle Nathan was excited about attending, and Tara was pleased that he wanted to attend. She gave him directions to her teacher's house and wrote down the street name and number. Tara even told Uncle Nathan the color of the house and where he should park.

However, Tara forgot to tell Uncle Nathan that the house was located on a one-way street. Because of this, Uncle Nathan had to drive out of his way and got lost. Fortunately, he arrived before Tara performed. He was, however, half an hour late.



Tara forgot to tell Uncle Nathan that the house was located on a one-way street.

Tara forgot that her Uncle was unfamiliar with the city. She did not give him enough information. Therefore, she failed to communicate correctly with him.

Every time you use words, your words are meant for a specific audience. This is true if you speak, and it is true if you write. In order to write well you must use words that the reader can understand. You must also give the reader the right amount of information.

Choosing the Right Words for an Audience

Use the right words—Choose words that your readers will understand. Also, choose words that are right for the occasion. Don't try to sound overly-educated with your friends. Don't use street slang with your teachers.

Provide enough information—Not every reader needs the same amount of explanation. Adjust the amount of details you provide to your readers. Also, provide the correct kind of details you give—definitions, background explanation, etc.

Remember: Everything you write has an intended reader or audience—one or more persons who will read what you've written.

Before you begin to write ask yourself the following questions:

- Who are my readers?

Are they your classmates, teacher, parents, best friend, the readers of a particular magazine, or the readers of “letters to the editor” in your local paper?

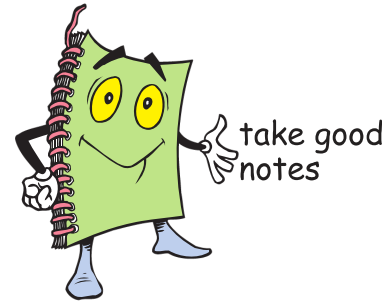
- What do I know about these readers?

Are they young or old? How much formal education have they had? What kinds of experience have they had? How do they feel about the topic? What do they already know about the topic? Are they already interested in the topic or will you have to generate their interest?

Writing the First Draft

So far in this unit, you have done the following:

- created a useful topic
- learned to take good notes
- organized these notes
- learned to write for your audience.



Now, you are ready to write a first draft.

Most first drafts are messy. They are also in need of much revision. When you write a first draft, you begin to mold your organized notes into sentences and paragraphs. Your goal in doing this is to make sense to your readers.

It is almost impossible to do this perfectly in one draft. You will find your work develops as you write. You will think of changes to make your **paragraph** better. The first draft is the perfect way to try different words, reorganize sentences, and add or take out details. In other words, the first draft will help you say exactly what you want to in your writing.

Developing a Paragraph

Many students seem to be born writers. They just "know" how to organize and write without much help. Other students, and this seems to be a majority, must work hard to write well. However, writing well is a skill that can be mastered.

The key to doing so involves three steps.

- First, you must select a good *subject*.
- Then, you must stick to that subject as you write.
- Finally, you must support this subject with plenty of details.



These three steps apply to long essays and to single paragraphs as well. We will begin by organizing and writing a *paragraph*. Later, you can use these skills for longer essays.

A paragraph is a group of sentences that develops a central idea. Although the length of a paragraph can vary greatly, a standard paragraph is usually made up of four or more related sentences. (Keep in mind as you read that creative writers often vary paragraph length. They do this when their characters speak. They also do this for emphasis or word flow.) Paragraphs are developed according to **purpose**. They can explain, which we call **expository** paragraphs; they can attempt to persuade; they can describe; and they can tell a story. We refer to this last type of paragraph as a **narrative**. Any of these paragraphs must do the same thing. It must give readers a clear picture of the topic.

Ways a Paragraph Can Be Developed

- It can be an *explanation*—called **expository writing**.
- It can be an *opinion*—called **persuasive writing**.
- It can be a *description*—called **descriptive writing**.
- It can be a *story*—called **narrative writing**.

As you prepare for your FCAT and Florida Writes assessment, you will probably be asked to become especially familiar with the *expository* and **persuasive** types of paragraphs and essays. The expository paragraph is especially important to review, as it can be developed in several ways. These are listed below.

1. **Definitions.** Use a definition to define a word, a process, or a concept.

Example: A decade means 10 years.

2. **Examples.** Use an example to give readers a specific instance.

Example: A ball tossed into the air shows the force of gravity.

3. **Facts.** Use a fact to support an opinion or claim you are making.

Example: The timer on the security camera shows that they got home before 8:00 p.m.

4. **Statistics (numbers or percentages).** Use statistics to prove what you are claiming is correct.

Example: Twenty percent of the class got an “A” on the test.

5. **Reasons or Causes.** Use a reason to justify a statement.

Example: Driving under the influence can cause accidents.

Sometimes writers have a hard time including enough details to support the main idea. If this happens to you, check the list above for ideas on the kinds of details you could add to your paragraph.

Remember: Readers need clear and accurate details to understand what you have written.

The Parts of a Paragraph

One of the sentences in a paragraph tells what the paragraph is mainly about. This sentence is called the **topic sentence**. The *topic sentence* also suggests how the rest of the paragraph is organized. This sentence is usually very general and will *not* contain specific details such as color or size. Often, a paragraph begins with the topic sentence. However, it can be located anywhere in the paragraph, even at the end.

The second part of the paragraph is the body. The **body paragraphs** make up the detail sentences, which give specific details about the topic. These details give important information and help readers understand the central idea of the paragraph. As you write these detail sentences, remember your *purpose* and your *audience*. These will point you to the right specifics to use in your paragraph.

Some paragraphs also include a concluding sentence. It may summarize a very long paragraph or reach a conclusion if needed. Like the topic sentence, the concluding sentence is very general. It will *not* offer specific facts or details.

The Parts of a Paragraph
<p>The topic sentence...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• tells what the paragraph is about.• suggests how the rest of the paragraph is organized.• usually is very general.• will not contain specific details.
<p>The body paragraphs...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• make up the detail sentences.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The detail sentences give specific details about the topic.• These details give important information and help readers understand the central idea of the paragraph.
<p>The concluding sentence...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• may summarize a very long paragraph.• may reach a conclusion if needed.• is very general.• will not offer specific facts or details.

The Topic Sentence

A good topic sentence serves as a guide for your readers. It previews the contents and the organization of the paragraph. The topic sentence serves a similar purpose for you, the writer. It helps you stay on topic as you provide specific details.

A good topic sentence should contain two things.

- It must contain an interesting subject.
- It also must tell your feelings (attitudes or opinions) about this topic.

For example, look at the following topic sentence:

Until 150 years ago, most children were denied the lengthy
childhoods most of us today are privileged to enjoy.

It contains a good subject. It also tells how the writer feels about it. It is a *good* topic sentence.

Look at a similar topic sentence that could introduce the same paragraph.

Until about 150 years ago, most parents thought of and treated
their children as younger adults.

It contains a good subject. However, it does not tell how the writer feels about it. It is a *weaker* topic sentence than the first.

The Body Paragraphs

The main part of the paragraph is the body, which contains information the reader needs to understand the topic. The *body paragraphs* make up the detail sentences. Unlike the topic sentence, these detail sentences are very specific.

However, it is very important that the topic sentence and detail sentences work together. Look at the following example paragraph. You will recognize the topic sentence stated earlier.

Topic Sentence:

Until 150 years ago, most children were denied the lengthy childhoods most of us today are privileged to enjoy.

Detail Sentences:

1. Many children worked beside their parents as soon as they were old enough to work.
2. If the father was a cobbler, his children most likely helped to make and fix shoes.
3. Parents who worked in factories thought themselves lucky if they could get their children jobs working beside them.

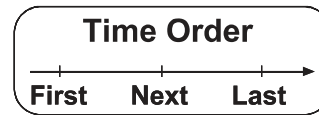
Notice how the two types of sentences work together.

- The topic sentences states a general topic and indicates the writer's opinion about this topic.
- The detail sentences offer reasons why the writer feels as she or he does. They support the opinion. The reasons and examples given are specific, visual, and accurate.

These *supporting details* must be organized in some way. How you organize them depends on the purpose of the paragraph. There are three main ways to organize a paragraph.

Chronological or Time Order

First is *chronological* or *time order*. Time order organizes details according to when they happened.



Writers should use certain key words or phrases, also called **transitions**, in these paragraphs. *Transitions* help link ideas, sentences, and paragraphs, and make your writing flow smoothly. These words and phrases also help the reader follow your thought process by seeing the connections between your ideas. Some of these transitions are listed below. (Also see Appendix A for a list of other transitions and connecting words.)

Examples of Key Words to Chronological Order	
after	instantly
at that time	last
at the same time	later
before	next
during	now
during that time	on that day
finally	second
first	then
immediately	until
in that month, week, year	when



You can use chronological order to tell a story. You might also use it to discuss historical causes. You could also use it to describe a process.

 **Remember:** To use chronological order, organize your *supporting details* according to time.

Order of Location

The second way to organize details in a paragraph is *order of location*. Order of location is helpful in describing places. This organization “leads” the readers’ eyes. It lets them “see” description in a logical order.

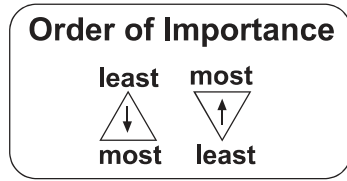


Again, special key words are helpful. The following key words show location:

Examples of Key Words That Show Location				
above	at	between	inside	outside
across	away from	beyond	into	over
against	behind	by	near	throughout
along	below	down	off	to the right
among	beneath	in back of	onto	under
around	beside	in front of	on top of	

Order of Importance

The third way to organize details in a paragraph is *order of importance*. This is helpful in discussing reasons or examples. *Persuasive* paragraphs often are written this way. *Persuasive writing* is used to convince a reader of something. The writer might list reasons to believe something in the order of importance.



You can organize the order in two ways. You can begin with the most important idea. However, it is usually more effective to end with the most important idea. This makes the most important idea the last one the reader sees.

As with the other two methods of development, transitions or transitional phrases help develop your paragraph. Following are examples of such words and phrases.

Examples of Key Words to Order of Importance	
a more important reason	in the first place; in the second place
also	more importantly
at times	moreover
besides	most importantly
for this reason	next
furthermore	to begin with
in addition	

The Closing Sentence

Not all paragraphs contain a **closing sentence**, but many of them do. The *closing sentence* is sometimes called the **clincher**. This sentence comes after all the details have been included. The closing sentence should do two things. First, it should remind readers of the subject. Second, it should keep them thinking about it.

Some specific ways of doing this include the following:

- reaching a conclusion
- suggesting any future courses of action
- summarizing the details
- restating the topic sentence.

There are key words to help you conclude. They include the following:

Example of Key Words That Help You Conclude		
all in all	finally	lastly
as a result	in conclusion	therefore
because	in summary	to sum up

Look at the closing sentences of the example paragraphs on the previous pages.

Paragraph Types

Paragraphs are written for many purposes. Most paragraphs fall into one of four types. Each type requires a different kind of planning.

The first two types of paragraphs are *descriptive* and *narrative*. These are often used for personal writing.

The second two types are expository and persuasive. These are most often used to communicate information to your readers. These are the two types of writing you will be most often asked to do during your FCAT and Florida Writes preparation and assessments.

Expository Writing: Delivering Information

Another word for expository is *explanatory*. An expository paragraph gives information. Often, you will use *descriptive* details in expository prose. However, expository writing is less interested in the reasons why you did something and more concerned with *how it was done* or *will be done*. Usually, your goal in writing an expository paragraph or essay is to *teach* or *inform*, not to explain your feelings about a possession or event.

Look at the following example of an expository paragraph. What kind of information does it give?

Calvinism, which greatly influenced America's first settlers, was a frightening religion. Calvinist doctrine stated that people were born evil. Furthermore, they were doomed to eternal damnation. The only exceptions were those individuals referred to as "the Elect." The Elect had been chosen by God to enter heaven. The rest of humanity would suffer in hell. No amount of good works would change their fate.

The details of the paragraph explain the doctrine of Calvinism. Every sentence is *relevant* and each provides information about the topic. None of the details are *irrelevant*.

For example, read the following sentence. "Religion is still important to people today." If that sentence was part of the expository paragraph above, it would have been considered an irrelevant sentence because it does not provide information about the topic. It is unrelated to the topic sentence.

Writing a focused paragraph with relevant details is very important to good expository writing.

Persuasive Writing: Offering an Opinion

Persuasive writing tries to change the reader's mind in some way.

Persuasive writing focuses on convincing readers of an opinion or claim, or to take a particular action. Very often, persuasive writers are explaining their own viewpoint, giving reasons why it should be followed. For this reason, they attempt to be as convincing as they can be.

Being convincing means being thorough and doing your research. You must provide very specific reasons why people should support your ideas.

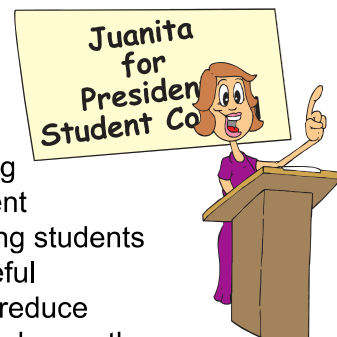
Imagine you are given the following paragraph on why you should elect Juanita as president of your school's student council. As you read, ask yourself: "Are there good reasons why I should vote for Juanita?"

Juanita is the best choice for president of our student council. Let me say it again: She is the best! I know her and you can take my word for it. She's done many good things for our school. Also, she cares about our school and her fellow students. Elect her or be sorry!

There may be good reasons to elect Juanita, but you still don't know what they are. What kinds of good things has Juanita done? How do you know that she cares about her school or fellow students? Why should you take the writer's word? More than likely, you don't know this person any better than you know Juanita. The fact that the writer likes Juanita says little to convince you that she will be a good president.

Now read another paragraph with the purpose of persuading you to vote for Juanita.

Through her contributions to Peaceful High School, Juanita has earned our vote to elect her as president of the student council. To begin, consider her work as a student representative during this past year. She began and still runs the Student Mediation Center. This student agency brings feuding students together to work out their differences through peaceful negotiations. Her work and this agency has helped reduce violence among students by 42%. Juanita also raised more than \$1,500 to buy books and clothing for students at this high school who are experiencing hard times. And finally, she helped persuade the school administration to give students a voice in making school policy. There is no better candidate to be our next student council president.



After reading this paragraph, you are most likely thinking, "Wow, Juanita is a great candidate. Look at all her accomplishments, right here in print for everyone to see!"

Let's analyze the paragraph on the previous page. The steps used to develop the expository paragraph are the same ones you will use to develop a persuasive one.

Step One: Determine Your Purpose and Select Your Topic

The writer's topic is Juanita's credentials to be student body president. His or her purpose is to convince readers to vote for Juanita because these credentials make her the best candidate.

Remember, in persuasive writing, you are stating an opinion, something someone could agree or disagree with. The writer's opinion (readers should vote for Juanita) fits this criterion.

Step Two: Determine Your Audience

The paragraph about Juanita was written for students just like you. The writer's words fit the reading ability of high school students. So did the sentence structure. The writer also chose evidence that high school students would think important: reducing violence and raising money for needy students.

Step Three: Collect Your Information

The writer obviously did this. The paragraph states exact details. Readers are told three specific accomplishments that Juanita has made. Not only that, exact figures are given to show her success. Violence has been reduced by 42%. Juanita has helped to raise more than \$1,500. These figures are more convincing than simply using general statements like "greatly" or "a lot." You can tell this writer did some research.

Step Four: Write a Topic Sentence

Remember that a topic sentence for a persuasive paragraph must contain two things: a useful topic and the writer's opinion. The writer's topic sentence does both. It clearly states that the writer feels Juanita is the best candidate and wants readers to accept this.

After reading this topic sentence, readers know what to expect from the paragraph. They know it will be organized according to several of Juanita's contributions to the school. Readers could expect to read about a first contribution, another contribution, and so on.

Step Five: Write Supporting Sentences Using Details from Your Research

You must use specific evidence that supports the claim that you have made in your topic sentence. Remember that types of evidence can include the following:

- descriptions
- examples
- facts
- reasons

Here, the writer used examples. All of her accomplishments are examples of why Juanita has earned students' votes. In addition, each of these examples are supported with facts: violence has decreased by 42%; Juanita raised more than \$1,500.

Take note of the writer's use of transitions. The transition words—to begin, also, and finally—clue the reader that they are moving through a list. This helps them organize the details about Juanita's credentials. Transitions also make the paragraph read more smoothly.

Step Six: Write a Closing Sentence

The closing sentence should remind your readers in some way of your opinion. Note how the writer found a brief way of doing this without repeating word-for-word what had already been stated. The writer also makes it clear how readers can actively support the opinion stated: vote for and elect Juanita.