

**3-12  
Writing  
Strategies**

## 3-12 Writing Strategies

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**Brain Writing as a Prewriting Tool** - If possible, place ELL of similar language backgrounds together so they can brain write in their primary languages; have the ESL teacher pre-brain write with ELL before they come to class (i.e. the ELL can speak and the ESL teacher can write as in the Language Experience Approach); allow ELL to use illustrations to participate in the brain writing activity; use the Language Experience approach to write what the ELL says (i.e. teacher as scribe).

**Cubing as a Prewriting Tool** - Use cubing to help students construct meaning about a specific topic. Students write for three to five minutes on each of the six sides of a cube (i.e. describe it, compare it, associate it, analyze it, apply it, and argue for or against it). The intent of cubing is to have students generate more ideas or perspectives.

**Discussion Continuum as a Prewriting Tool** - This strategy provides a structured format for a whole class discussion of a topic to build background knowledge around an issue. Write two statements on opposite ends of the board - one for a position and one against - have students write their initials along the continuum to show where they stand and then explain their positions, often using references from reading to support their ideas (note: all students must have a chance to speak before others have a second chance). The ideas presented broaden students' perspectives on issues, gives them ideas for their writing, and connects talking to writing.

**Examples as a Prewriting Tool** - (Urquhart & McIver, 2005) - Select a nonfiction text for students to read and highlight text features they find effective and, if needed, model a couple with the class. Students should pay close attention to the final column when planning their writing. See the example on the following page.

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Sample text	Feature or craft	Effect	When will I use it?
"Folk Art Jubilee" by Brian Noyes ( <i>Smithsonian</i> , October 2003)	mixes photographs and sketches	Photographs are precise; sketches leave more to the viewer's imagination	I will use a photograph when I want my reader to see the exact features of an object and a sketch when the reader does not need a precise rendering.
"The typically taciturn Suddeth brightens as he recalls his breakthrough moment at age 7" (p. 80).	uses alliteration	Lets the writer be playful without having to use slang	When I want to use slang or other commonly used words

**4-2-1 Free Write Strategy as a Prewriting Tool** (Strong, Silver, Perini, Tuculescu; 2002) - Use the 4-2-1 strategy to make the connection between reading and writing. Individually, students read and jot down four main ideas. In pairs, they share their ideas and together come up with two main ideas (select or synthesize from among the eight ideas). This pair joins another pair and, as a group of four, the students come up with one main idea (select or synthesize from among the four ideas). Finally, each student writes as much as she can about that one main idea. The 'free write' can serve as a prewriting/ draft for those students who complain about "not knowing what to write about." See the accompanying graphic organizer on the following page.

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1. Idea	2. Idea	3. Idea	4. Idea
1. Central Idea		2. Central Idea	
1 Big Idea			
Free Write			

**Graphic Organizers as a Prewriting Tool** - Have students complete a graphic organizer as a during- or post-reading strategy. The students then use the graphic organizer as a means to plan their own piece of coherent writing. It is imperative that graphic organizers represent the type of writing expected (e.g. a venn diagram assists with the text structure of compare/ contrast). Graphic organizers can help students leap from skillful reading to skillful writing when the connections are made explicit for writers.

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**Journals as a Prewriting Tool** - Students are encouraged to do jot down ideas in all their subject areas as a vehicle for informal writing to help them process and connect information, language, and problem-solving skills from one class to another.

**Prewriting Chart as a Prewriting Tool** (Stephens & Brown, 2005) Develop a chart with students about the kinds of writing that will be expected in your class or subject. The chart should help students distinguish three broad categories of school writing: writing without composing, writing to learn, and writing to demonstrate learning. The concept is to help students understand the purposes for different kinds of writing so they understand the processes or strategies used for each type.

<b>Writing without Composing</b>	<b>Writing to Learn</b>	<b>Writing to Demonstrate Learning</b>
Lists Note taking Brainstorming Fill-in-the-blank Outlining	Journals Logs Quickwrites Rough drafts Short answers Content notebooks Response guides Lab notebooks	Essays Book reports & reviews Research papers Written projects Formal letters Newspaper writing Expository writing Narrative writing Creative writing

**Task-Based Rubrics as a Prewriting Tool** - A task-based rubric focuses on the writing process rather than the product (e.g. analytical rubric). The rubric establishes clear criteria before the students begin each stage. The entire rubric can be shared with students or each row can be shared with students as they progress through each stage of the writing process. Students can also sort pieces of writing to understand the criteria of each column of the rubric. Sample rubrics are provided on the following pages.

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## Grade 2 Task-Based Writing Process Rubric

### Narrative Text

	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Approaches Expectations</b>
<b>Prewriting</b>	I decide who will read my story and what I want to tell them in the beginning, middle, and end. I pick a prewriting strategy to help me organize what I want to say. I find words and phrases that I can use to make my reader more interested.	With help from my teacher, I decide who will read my story and decide what I want to tell them in the beginning, middle, and end. I make a list of words and phrases that I can use in my story.	I wait for the teacher to tell me what to write. When the teacher says I have to write more, I sometimes get ideas from my friends. I use words I already know.
<b>Drafting</b>	I use my prewriting tools to write a story that has a beginning, middle and end. I use my notes (drawings) and my own experiences to help me write my story. I write what I want to say and what I think my readers will like to hear.	I use my ideas to write a story that has a beginning, middle and end. I use what I know in my own life to help me with my story. I write what I want to say but I add extra ideas.	I write words when the teacher tells us to. I write one big paragraph. I copy ideas from books and friends because I don't know what to say.
<b>Revising</b>	I change words and phrases in my story so the readers will like it better. In writing conferences, I give ideas to others and I use others' ideas to make my story better.	I change some of my words and phrases to make my writing sound better. I change some of my sentences after other writers give me some ideas.	I copy my story again but make some changes with words and sentences because my teacher tells me to.
<b>Editing</b>	I checked my stories and the stories of other writers for mistakes with capitals, punctuation, and spelling. I made sure that my writing and the writing of others is ready.	I use capitals, spaces, punctuation, and correct spelling in my writing. I made sure that my people, places, and things agree with action words.	I write my story again and change some words because my teacher tells me to.

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## Grade 9 Task-Based Research Writing Chec-Bric

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Attention
<b>Use writing process (informational writing)</b>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Justifies the use of a prewriting strategy to organize information into a plan</p> <p><b>Uses strategies to draft and revise as follows:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> follows pre-planned organizational plan to ensure each thesis is supported with evidence, arguments, details, quotations, examples, analogies, anecdotes, visuals</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> uses an organizational pattern that builds up to unified argument coherently and with mounting credibility</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> provides references to verify accuracy and depth of information</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> redrafts for readability and engagement of readers through transitional, cohesive and stylistic devices</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Selects a prewriting strategy to organize notes into a plan (i.e. graphic organizer, diagrams, outline)</p> <p>Uses strategies to draft and revise as follows:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> develops a thesis and provide supporting evidence, arguments, and details through paraphrase, quotation, examples, comparisons, analogies, anecdotes, visuals</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> uses an organizational format that provides direction, coherence, and unity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> checks accuracy and depth of information</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> redrafts for readability and needs of readers through transitional and cohesive devices</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> conveys a personal style and voice through a specific</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Copies information from the reading to start writing</p> <p><b>Uses strategies to draft and revise as follows:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> writes one big paragraph and count words to make sure there are enough</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> copies words and sentences from material taken</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> copies a lot from books and the internet</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> copies draft again</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> makes some changes to words and sentences</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> expresses personal style and voice through a combination of techniques</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> aligns form and function of message strategically and purposefully</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> uses rules of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling to review own and others' work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> uses correct grammatical construction to review own and others' work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> uses dictionaries, thesauruses, and style to support own and others' work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> cites primary and secondary sources in bibliography and citations in own and others' work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> uses computer technology to create, manipulate, and edit text of own and others' work</li> </ul>	<p>technique (e.g. sentence variety, multiple viewpoints, stream of consciousness)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ensures that content and linguistic structure are consistent with purpose</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> uses the rules of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling to review work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> uses correct grammatical construction to review work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> uses dictionaries, thesauruses, and style manuals to support work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> cites primary and secondary sources in bibliography and citations in own work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> uses computer technology to create, manipulate, and edit text of work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> once written, has no need to re-read</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> leaves errors unchanged</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> leaves out bibliography and citations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> types paper</li> </ul>
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**Writer's Notebooks as a Prewriting Tool** - Have students keep track of whatever they see, hear, or read in notebooks. These pages serve as prewriting activities for focused writing later. They could use the following questions to guide their thinking: Why am I writing about this topic?, Why is this important to me?, What do I really want to say about this topic and to whom do I want to say it?, What details will help to communicate a clear message?, What models can I use to guide the organization of my document?, and What will my final product have in common with my models?

**Guided Writing as a Drafting Tool** - Use this tool to guide students from pre-writing to drafting in stages. Divide the pre-writing plan into appropriate sections and have students write as much as they can for each section. The sections do not have to be followed in any order so if students get stuck while drafting, they should move on to another section.

**Hennings Sequence as a Drafting Tool** (Sejnost & Thiese, 2001) - Use the strategy to help writers clarify the organization of information: (1) 'fact storming' is a way to record students' knowledge after they have had a chance to become familiar with a topic through viewing films and slides, interviewing people, going on excursions, reading, talking, and observing; (2) students organize the concepts from 'fact storming' by producing data charts in small groups (i.e. vertical and horizontal categories of information); (3) students draft paragraphs by directly translating the information contained in the data charts' columns, rows, or cells; (4) students then draft the introduction and conclusions as a teacher-guided, group writing activity; (5) students are guided through reading similar pieces of discourse using the data chart concept as a post-reading activity in addition to a prewriting one; and (7) students return to their writing to revise their drafts.

**Looping as a Drafting Tool** - Students begin writing their ideas for a draft nonstop for 10 minutes. Students or teachers read over the writing and circle one aspect to explore further. Students write for another 10 minutes about the selected ideas. Again, characteristics or details from the second draft are circled and students write for another 10 minutes. When students finish looping, they have more and more ideas in their drafts and can begin the revising stage of the process.

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**Pair Talking as a Drafting Tool** - Use this strategy to help students *work out* vocabulary and linguistic structures that might impede their writing. In pairs, have one student talk about what he or she wants to write in response to questions posed by the other student and then have them both draft what was said.

**Writing Workshop as a Drafting/ Revising/ Editing Tool** - This strategy can be used as an effective tool for drafting/ revising/ or editing in the writing process, depending on the focus and timing of the session. It allows for differentiation of the writing process so that students can work at their pace, just as real writers usually do. Use the following format: a five- to ten-minute mini lesson focusing on a skill or concept, student writing for 20 to 25 minutes, and the last 10 to 15 minutes are used for sharing. Areas to focus on in the revising/ editing stage (i.e. Writer's Workshop checklist) include vocabulary, content, conciseness, clarity, strength, introduction, connectors, conclusion, proofreading, and presentation.

**Conferring as a Revising Tool** - Divide a piece of paper into columns with one of the following sets of headings:

1. questions the reader asked	1. I like
2. comments the reader made	2. I wonder
3. concerns the reader expressed	3. questions I have
4. my plan of action to revise	

Use these prompts in a teacher-student conference, a student-student conference, or by a student alone.

**Divorcing the Draft as a Revising Tool** (Urquhart & McIver, 2005) - This strategy gives writers an opportunity to detach themselves from a draft in its current form. The steps include: (1) ask students to select a draft that needs revising, (2) tell them to use a pair of scissors to cut the draft by paragraphs or

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sentences, (3) mix the paragraphs or sentences out of the original order, (4) ask students to sift through the cut pieces looking for the one that best describes the message they want to convey, (5) students continue sorting through the remaining pieces looking for those that relate to the central idea, (6) when the sorting is complete, students should lay out the saved items and reorder them, (7) students tape the rearranged sentences and add new ones, and (8) they retype the revision. Cutting and pasting is worth doing because it gives permission to writers to divorce the draft.

**Double-Entry Journals as a Revising Tool** - Use a double-entry journal format to respond to students' writing: one column copies students' words and the other column is used for teacher or peer response to the selected pieces.

**Two-Column Count as a Revising Tool** - Have students do an exercise where they list the first word of every sentence and then count the number of words in those sentences. By writing the results on a page with two columns - one column for the first words and one with the word totals - they might see that some sentence variety is needed (or that some sentences are probably long enough to be run-ons).

**Rewording as a Revising Tool** (Urquhart & McIver, 2005) - Ask students to choose a selection of writing that needs revision. Direct them to switch papers with a partner and have the partners read the selection, highlighting any words that are new to them. Partners then read each word to the authors, asking them to write a definition for each term using their own words. Partners substitute these definitions for the highlighted word and reread the sentences.

**Sharing as a Revising Tool** - There are several ways in which writers can share their work for revision purposes. They can share immediately after they complete their drafts in small groups. The format of a Writer's Circle can be used whereby writers select a passage they would like to revise and then ask others for their suggestions or all the writers focus on a particular area for revision (e.g. word choice or sentence variety) for consensual ideas. Another way might be to have students go around the room and share a particular item from their writing that the teacher thinks others might be able to use.

**Surprise! Strategy as a Revising Tool** - Use the 'surprise' strategy as a way of letting the writer know that the revision stage of the writing process can be used to reflect on whether or not the reader will be attracted to the piece of writing.

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Have writers come up with possible alternatives and then have readers select which alternative they prefer with a justification for the writer. For example, have writers come up with an alternative introduction or conclusion and readers select which they prefer or have writers switch a point of view and readers react accordingly. This strategy can be used to let the writer know that there are different ways to change a piece of writing, and that the reader needs to be taken into consideration (and that readers sometimes have surprising suggestions).

**'Don't to Do' List as an Editing Tool** -If students do not know how to edit their work using the symbols of an editing checklist, then an interim step might be needed. Divide a paper into two columns - one labeled '*don'ts*' and the other labeled '*do's*.' Invest some time in copying representative errors that students make in their papers onto the '*don'ts*' column (i.e. spelling, grammar, and usage errors). Copy them exactly as the students wrote them. Pair students into 'like error' pairs and have them work together to turn the '*don'ts*' into '*do's*.' Give them some strategies for getting this task done; for example, use dictionaries or word walls for the spelling errors, refer back to readings for the grammar errors, and use a proficient peer for the usage errors). Once students begin to explicitly grasp the concept of errors (*don'ts*) and the need for self-correction (*do's*), they will grow into the process implicitly (i.e. using an editing checklist). The time you invest will be worth the results.

**Peer Editing as an Editing Tool** - Peer editing checklists can be shared with students during a writer's workshop lesson. Students then use the checklist to edit the paper of another or others' papers. They can use a series of checkmarks throughout the composition with accompanying asterisks, describing the errors or a formal editing checklist.

**Publication as an Editing Tool** - Writing can be displayed on bulletin boards, school show cases, or waiting rooms. Students can formally share their writing in informal settings, much like 'coffee house readings' or through formal settings as in 'writing contests' or through formal publications. Students come to understand that they are writing for 'real audiences' outside of the classroom through the publication of their writing.

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