

SPECTRUM[®]

Writing

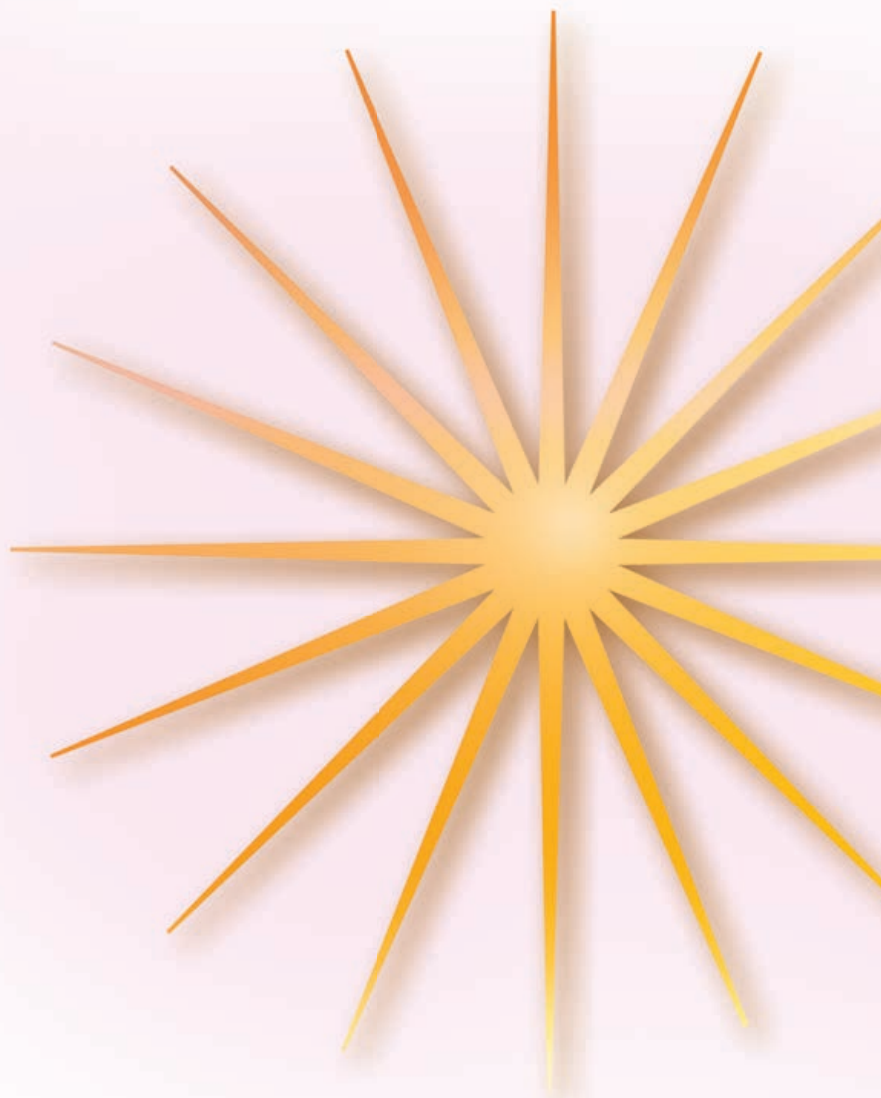
GRADE

7



Focused Practice for Writing Mastery

- Writing a story
- Writing to inform
- Writing an argument
- Using the writing process
- Writer's Handbook



Lesson 1 The Writing Process

Writers follow a plan when they write. The steps they take make up the writing process. Following these five steps leads to better writing.

Step 1: Prewrite

This is the “thinking and discovering” stage. Writers might choose a topic, or they might list everything they know about a topic already chosen. They might conduct research and take notes. Then, writers may organize their ideas by making a chart or diagram.

Step 2: Draft

Writers put their ideas on paper. This first draft should contain sentences and paragraphs. Good writers keep their prewriting ideas nearby. There will be mistakes in this draft, but there is time to fix them later.

Step 3: Revise

Writers change or fix their first draft. They move ideas around, put them in a different order, or add information. They make sure they used clear words and that the sentences sound good together. This is also the time to take out ideas that are not on topic.

Step 4: Proofread

Writers usually write or type a neat, new copy. Then, they look again to make sure everything is correct. They look especially for errors in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Step 5: Publish

Finally, writers make a final copy that has no mistakes. They are now ready to share their writing.

Lesson 1 The Writing Process

What does the writing process look like? Manuel used the writing process to write a paragraph about ocean life. His writing steps below are out of order. Label each step with a number and the name of the step.

Step ____: _____

The ocean has three distinct zones or habitats. Similar to habitats on dry land. Closest to shore is the shallows and the continental shelf. These most fertile areas teem with life. plant and animal life abound. Rivers bring nutrients, and sunlight penetrates the water for warmth and light.

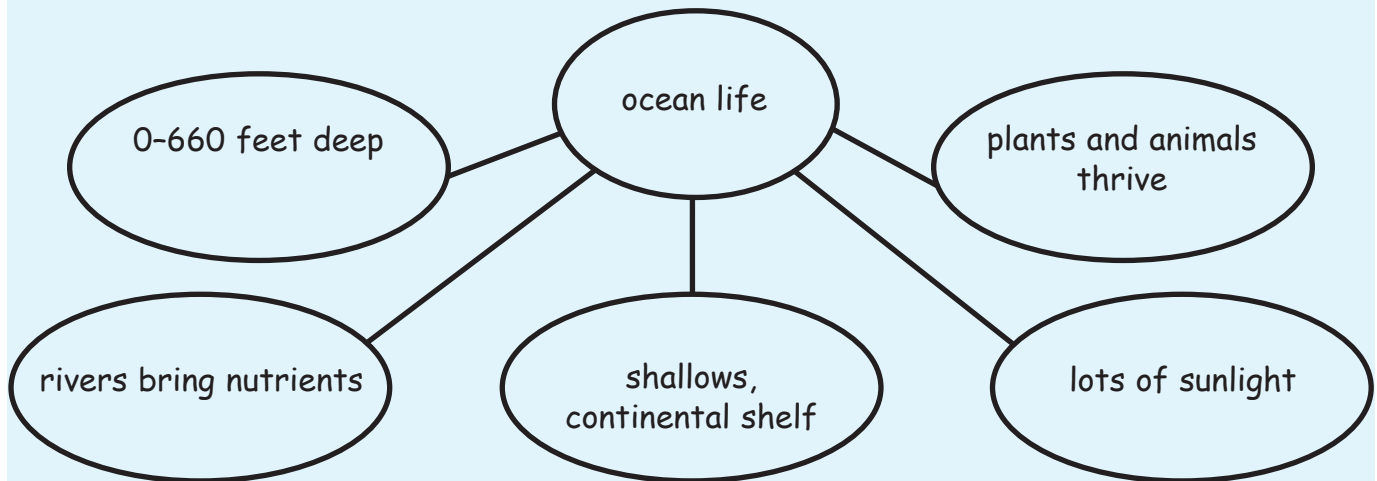
Step ____: _____

The ocean has three distinct zones, or habitats. Closest to shore are the shallows and the continental shelf. These most fertile areas teem with life. Rivers bring nutrients, and sunlight penetrates the water to provide warmth and light. Plant and animal life abound.

Step ____: _____

The ocean has three distinct zones or habitats. ~~Similar to habitats on dry land.~~ Closest to shore ^{are} is the shallows and the continental shelf. These most fertile areas teem with life. plant and animal life abound. Rivers bring nutrients, and sunlight ^{to provide} penetrates the water for warmth and light.

Step ____: _____



Step ____: _____

The ocean has three distinct zones or habitats. Closest to shore are the shallows and the continental shelf. These most fertile areas teem with life. Rivers bring nutrients, and sunlight penetrates the water to provide warmth and light. plant and animal life abound.

Lesson 2 Audience

When Mrs. Prescott writes a worksheet for her first-grade students, does she use long sentences and complicated words? No. She uses words and sentences that are appropriate for her students; they are her audience. If Mrs. Prescott does not keep her audience in mind, they will not understand. In this case, they will not learn.

When Mrs. Prescott writes a letter to her students' parents, does she use the same short words and sentences that she uses with her students? Surely not. The parents are adults; they can understand more complicated words and sentences than her students can. If Mrs. Prescott were to use first-grade language for the parents, they would lose interest. Writers need to keep their audience in mind at all times.



Writers need to consider these questions every time they write.

What will my audience enjoy?

What are they interested in?

What will make them want to keep on reading?

What do they already know?

What will they understand?

Here is a note that Mrs. Prescott wrote for her students' parents. Did she keep her audience in mind?

Dear Parents,

On Thursday, April 11th, our class will visit the Children's Museum. The museum has rooms where the children can learn about clocks, water, fossils, and racecars. We are looking forward to a very exciting day.

Did she keep her audience in mind? How can you tell?

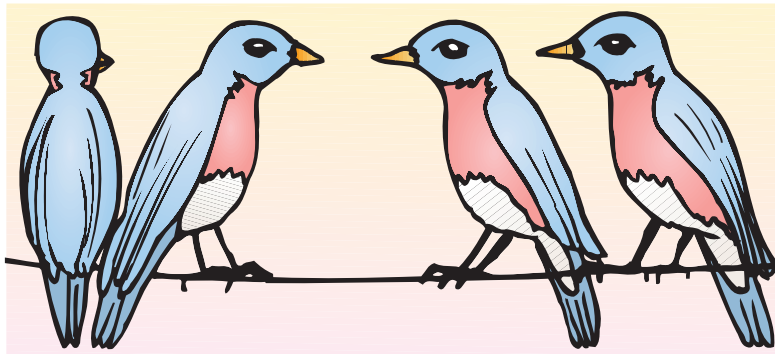
Lesson 3 Main Ideas and Details

The main idea of a paragraph is what the paragraph is all about. In most paragraphs, the main idea is actually stated in the paragraph. That statement is the **topic sentence**. A topic sentence may be anywhere in a paragraph, but most often it is either the first sentence or the last.

The bluebirds playing in my yard are a lovely sight. They are Eastern Bluebirds, and their bright feathers easily catch my eye. They seem always to appear in groups of two or three. I wonder if they are families or just “friends.” They move about in such a lively way from ground to telephone wires and back. And the little chitter I hear almost sounds like laughter.

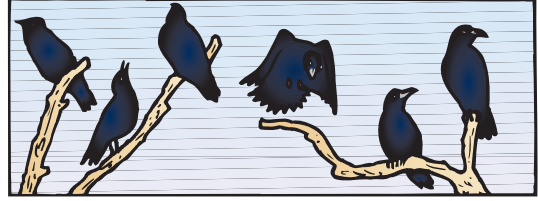
Write the topic sentence from the paragraph.

The other sentences include details that support, or tell about, the main idea. Write two details from the paragraph.



Lesson 3 Main Ideas and Details

Not all paragraphs have a topic sentence. Sometimes, writers leave it out. The paragraph still has a main idea, but the writer chooses not to state the main idea in the paragraph. Here is an example.



I was awakened by a bird this morning. It wasn't the sweet little "chirp, chirp" that you read about in children's stories. It was the "squawk, squawk" of a crow. He was right outside my window and he was loud, let me tell you. Why did he choose my window? What was he squawking about? It was not a good start to my day.

What is the main idea of the paragraph above?

How do you feel about birds? Choose one of these sentences as a topic sentence for a paragraph:

I don't know anything about birds.

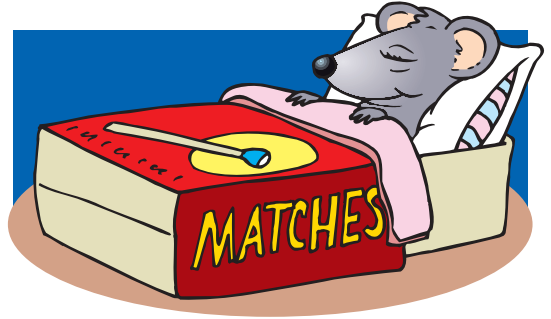
I like watching birds.

I would like to be a bird.

Now, write a paragraph in which you support your main idea with details. Remember to choose just one topic sentence. Decide whether you will put it at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the paragraph.

Lesson 4 Staying on Topic

Normally, all of the details in a picture fit the main idea. The same should be true of a paragraph: all of the details should fit the main idea. In other words, each sentence must stay on topic. The following paragraph contains a sentence that is not on topic. Read the paragraph and underline the topic sentence. Then, draw a line through the sentence that does not support the topic sentence.



When I was a kid, I especially loved stories that had animals as characters. Mice were my favorite. The mice in our attic sometimes make noise at night. Their homes always captured my imagination. It seems they always had little chairs and tables, shelves full of food, and little dishes that they had “stolen” from the people in the house. Bottle caps were bowls and matchboxes were beds. I always hoped that the mice in our house had homes as nice as the ones in my stories.

Now, write your own paragraph about a mouse or about a story you remember from your childhood. Remember to stay on topic. Stick to one main idea and make sure that all of your detail sentences support that main idea. When you are finished, underline your topic sentence.

Lesson 5 Write a Paragraph

Here is what you know about paragraphs.

- A paragraph is a group of sentences about the same topic.
- Each sentence in a paragraph stays on topic.
- The main idea of a paragraph is what the paragraph is all about.
- A paragraph's main idea is usually stated in a topic sentence. The topic sentence may fall anywhere in the paragraph.
- The first line of a paragraph is indented.
- Writers must consider the audience for which they are writing.

What is your idea of a great field trip? Where would you go? What would you do? What would you learn? List some details that would be part of your perfect, one-day field trip.

Details:

Review your list. Think about the order in which you want to present your details in a paragraph. If you wish, number them. Then, draft a paragraph about your idea of a terrific field trip. Your purpose is to convince a teacher that your idea is a good one.

Lesson 5 Write a Paragraph

Read through your paragraph. Ask yourself these questions. If necessary, make changes to your paragraph.

Questions to Ask About a Paragraph

- Does the topic sentence express the main idea?
- Does each sentence support the topic sentence?
- Does each sentence express a complete thought?
- Are the ideas in the paragraph appropriate for the audience?
- Is the first line indented?

Now that you have thought about the content, or meaning, of your paragraph, proofread it for errors. Look through several times, searching for a certain kind of error each time. Use this checklist.

- ___ Each sentence begins with a capital letter.
- ___ Each sentence ends with the correct punctuation (period, question mark, or exclamation point).
- ___ Each sentence states a complete thought.
- ___ All words are spelled correctly.

Now, rewrite your paragraph. Use your neatest handwriting and make sure there are no errors in the final copy.

Lesson 6 Active Voice

Usually, the subject of a sentence does the action. That is easy to see in this sentence:

The wind blows.

The verb in the sentence is an **active verb** because the subject (*wind*) does the action (*blows*).

What about this sentence?

The tree was blown down.

Tree is the subject of the sentence. Does the tree do the action? No, the tree does not do the action; the tree “receives” the action. The verb, *was blown*, is a **passive verb** because the subject does not do the action.

Passive verbs are always two-part verbs. There is always one of these helping verbs—*am, is, was, be, been*—plus a main verb. However, that does not mean that whenever you see one of those helping verbs, you are looking at a passive verb.

Passive verb: My bike *was tipped* over.

Active verb: The wind *was blowing*.

How can you tell the difference? Ask yourself these two questions:

What is the subject?

Is the subject doing the action?

If the answer to the second question is “no,” then you have a passive verb.

Sometimes, writers have to use passive verbs when they write. Maybe the writer doesn’t know who did the action, so, “My bike was tipped over” is the only option. Most of the time, however, writing is clearer and more interesting if writers use active verbs.

