

RB-904062



FIFTH-SIXTH GRADES

Skill Builders

# Writing

Grades  
**5-6**

supports  
**NCTE**  
standards



**Skills Include:**

- Generating Ideas
- Organization
- Word Choice
- Fluency
- Voice
- Conventions

**Includes Critical Thinking Pages!**

Skill Builders are great for keeping students current during the school year or preparing them for the grade ahead during the summer!

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# Brainstorming

## IDEAS

One of the first decisions to make when creating a piece of writing is what to write about. It is sometimes difficult to find a good writing topic, especially on command.

To generate a writing idea, start by listing possible subjects within a topic. For example, your teacher may want you to write about one of your favorite places. To start, you might write down some of the places to which you have been. You could also list some of your favorite places within your state or province, the city where you live, or places you enjoy around your home or school. This technique of generating ideas is called **brainstorming**, and it is a great tool for writers to use when they are thinking about a writing topic.

**Directions:** Use the brainstorming technique to create a list of foods you like in the space below. Begin by thinking of different categories of foods, like *snacks*, *desserts*, or *main courses*. Then, list foods that will fit into those categories.

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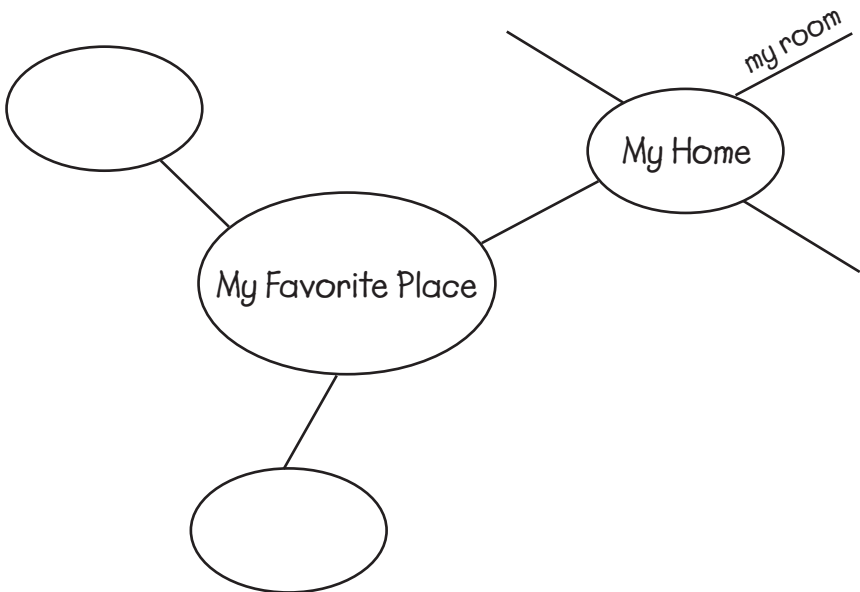
# Idea Clusters

## IDEAS

Another way to develop ideas for a writing assignment is to use an **idea cluster**. Many writers use an idea web or a cluster to organize their thoughts about a topic into categories. This makes planning for writing much easier.

First, choose a main topic. For example, pretend that your teacher wants you to write a paragraph about your favorite place. This is the main idea, so write *My Favorite Place* in the center oval. Next, draw ovals surrounding the main idea. These ovals will contain words that classify those favorite places, such as *Vacations*, *My City*, *My State*, *My School*, and *My Home*. Finally, add lines that extend from each of these outer ovals and list specific examples of your favorite places.

**Directions:** Imagine that your teacher wants you to write about your favorite place. Complete the idea cluster below by adding subtopics and specific examples of your favorite places. Add additional ovals and lines as needed.



# Fastwriting

## IDEAS

When writing about a topic, it is helpful to have a collection of ideas. One way to start a collection is to keep a notebook for writing ideas. Set aside a couple of minutes each day to brainstorm. Simply sit down, open a notebook, and write down everything that comes to mind for two minutes. This technique is called **fastwriting**, and writers can use it to generate ideas for future use.

**Directions:** Try fastwriting in the space below. Use another sheet of paper if you need more room. Write everything that comes to mind for two minutes. Do not worry about writing complete sentences or using correct grammar. When the time is up, keep the page and add it to a writing notebook to use in the future. Do the same thing again tomorrow. You will be surprised by how many ideas you collect.

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# Outlining for Ideas

## IDEAS

Creating an **outline** can be a very effective way to collect and narrow writing ideas. An outline is similar to an idea cluster. A writer starts with a main idea, then adds subtopics and specific details. Use an outline to plan the information that must be gathered and included in an essay. An outline can also be used to narrow a writer's focus from a broad topic to one that is more narrow.

**Directions:** Use the outlining template below to gather ideas for the broad subject of *television*. Continue on another sheet of paper if you need more room.

### Television

I. \_\_\_\_\_

A. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

II. \_\_\_\_\_

A. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

# Picture This

## IDEAS

You have probably heard the saying, *A picture is worth a thousand words*. One thousand words are not always necessary, but **pictures** can be used as a source for writing ideas.

**Directions:** Look at some of your photos or scrapbooks at home. As you browse the photos, write the names of friends and relatives, pets, favorite toys, family vacations, or other subjects that might provide you with ideas for your writing. Write the subjects of any interesting photos you find in the left column below. When you are finished looking at the photos, write future writing ideas in the right column.

Subjects of Photos	Writing Ideas

# What If . . .

## IDEAS

Answering the question, *What if . . .* can lead to many interesting writing topics. Experience is a great resource for writing ideas, but your **imagination** has no boundaries.

**Directions:** On the lines provided, answer the *What if . . .* questions below. Add your answers to your idea journal for future writing assignments.

What if you could fly? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What if you won the lottery? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What if time ran backward? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What if animals could talk? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What if adults went to school and kids went to jobs? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What if you were paid to go to school? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Narrowing Your Focus

## IDEAS

Once you have collected a pool of ideas, the next step is to review your list. Think about how each idea could be used in writing. Who would be the audience? From what point of view should the piece be written? What kind of writing will it be? Is it a story? A poem? Perhaps it is an essay that explains the steps for completing a task.

Imagine that you are given an assignment to write a paragraph on a topic of your choice. You look back at your fastwriting journal lists and see the word *bicycle*. This is a very broad topic, so you will need to **narrow the focus** of your idea. Do you want to write about bicycle safety? Perhaps you will write about a place you have been on your bicycle or about when you learned how to ride a bicycle. Each of these ideas could narrow your focus and give you something specific to write about.

**Directions:** Review your idea lists. In the left column below, write some very broad topics that you recorded in your idea notebook. Then, in the right column, narrow the focus of those ideas into specific topics that you could write about.

Broad Topics	Specific Topics

# Expanding the Idea

## IDEAS

Developing ideas for writing involves more than just choosing a topic. After a writer has a specific topic, she must then decide on the details to include in her piece. One way to help develop details is to answer the **five Ws**: *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *why*. Answering *how* can also help expand the idea.

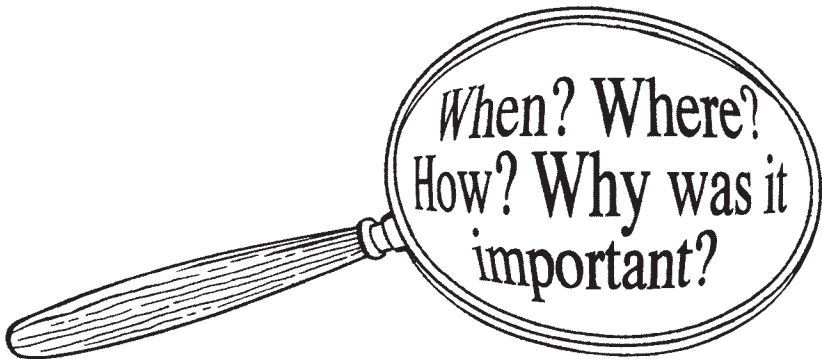
Consider the sentence, *The roof leaked*. This sentence gives the reader some information, but it does not answer many of the important five Ws.

- Last night the roof leaked. (*when*)
- The roof over my room leaked onto my desk last night. (*where*)
- I could not sleep last night because the leaky roof in my room was dripping water onto my desk. (*why this is important*)

Do you see how much more information the sentences above provide? You know much more about the leaky roof when the five Ws are answered.

**Directions:** On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences to answer the questions listed.

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. The wind blew.      | 2. The game was close. |
| When?:                 | When?:                 |
| Where?:                | Where?:                |
| How?:                  | How?:                  |
| Why was it important?: | Why was it important?: |



# Getting It Together

## ORGANIZATION

A writer must have an organizational plan to create a story or an informative paper. That plan often involves separating information into categories. One way to do this is to organize data with an **outline**. To create an outline, find the main idea or broad topic first. Next, decide what the subheadings (or subtopics) will be. Finally, add the related points and supporting details under each subheading.

**Directions:** Read the word bank below. Your first task is to find the main idea. What is this data about? Next, find the subheadings. What are the specific topics under the main idea? Finally, find the supporting details that are related to each subheading. You will use all of the words that are in the word bank.

### Word Bank

paper	supplies	pencils
classroom	textbooks	desks
furniture	chairs	pens
reference books	books	
storage cabinets	library books	

I. \_\_\_\_\_ C. \_\_\_\_\_

A. \_\_\_\_\_ 1. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Answer Key

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## Pages 4–11

Answers will vary.

## Page 12, Getting it Together

Order will vary.

I. classroom; A. furniture;

1. desks; 2. storage cabinets;
3. chairs; B. supplies; 1. pens;
2. pencils; 3. paper; C. books;
1. library books; 2. textbooks;
3. reference books

## Pages 13–25

Answers will vary.

## Page 26, Choosing the Right Adjective

1. idle; 2. defiant; 3. exotic;
4. optimistic; 5. controversial;
6. sturdy; 7. modest; 8. somber

## Page 27, Adding Adjectives

Answers will vary.

## Page 28, Vivid Verbs

1. walked; 2. threw; 3. hit;
4. liked; 5. drove; 6. walked;
7. hurried; 8. ran

Other answers will vary.

## Page 29, Verbs on Active Duty

Answers will vary.

## Page 30, Homographs

1. wind; 2. does; 3. row;
4. produce; 5. separate; 6. dove;
7. refuse; 8. putting

## Page 31, As Quiet as a Church Mouse

2. clues, Easter eggs (hidden like); 3. test, pie (as easy as);
4. road, butter (as slippery as);
5. Erica, swan (as graceful as);
6. linebacker, house (as big as);
7. Michael, brick wall (like);
8. shoes, dirt (as old as); 9. mind, tack (as sharp as); 10. house, night (as dark as); 11. Corey, molasses (as slow as)

## Pages 32–42

Answers will vary.

## Page 43, Furthermore

1. F.; 2. D.; 3. A.; 4. D.; 5. B.;
6. D.; 7. D.; 8. F.; 9. A.; 10. E.;
11. A.; 12. E.; 13. C.; 14. B.;
15. D.; 16. C.; 17. A.; 18. C.;
19. D.; 20. F.

## Pages 44–51

Answers will vary.

## Page 52, Who Said That?

1. B.; 2. A.; 3. E.; 4. F.; 5. C.;
6. G.; 7. D.