

The Common Core State Standards

Writing

The grades 6–12 standards on the following pages define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade. They correspond to the CCR anchor standards by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

Text Types and Purposes*

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the elective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using elective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Note on Range and Content of Student Writing

For students, writing is a key means of asserting and defending claims, showing what they know about a subject, and conveying what they have experienced, imagined, thought, and felt. To be CCR writers, students must take task, purpose, and audience into careful consideration, choosing words, information, structures, and formats deliberately. They need to know how to combine elements of different kinds of writing—for example, to use narrative strategies within argument and explanation within narrative—to produce complex and nuanced writing. They need to be able to use technology strategically when creating, refining, and collaborating on writing. They have to become adept at gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately and reporting findings from their research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner. They must have the flexibility, concentration, and fluency to produce high-quality, first-draft text under a tight deadline as well as the capacity to revisit and make improvements to a piece of writing over multiple drafts when circumstances encourage or require it.

* These broad types of writing include many subgenres. See Appendix A for definitions of key writing types.

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College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for

Writing

The College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards are the same for all middle and high school students, regardless of subject area or grade level. What varies is the sophistication of the writing of the three types—argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative—stressed at each subsequent grade level in each disciplinary domain. The core writing skills should not change as students advance; rather, the level at which they learn and can perform those skills should increase in complexity as students move from one grade to the next.

Text Types and Purposes*

Argument appears first as it is essential to success in college and develops the critical faculties needed in the adult world. Crafting arguments requires students to analyze texts or topics, and determine which evidence best supports their arguments. Informational/explanatory writing conveys ideas, events, and findings by choosing and explaining the behavior, meaning, or importance of key details.

Students draw from a range of sources, including primary and secondary sources. Narrative writing includes not just stories but accounts of historical events and lab procedures. Students write to change minds, hearts, and actions (argument); to extend readers' knowledge or acceptance of ideas and procedures (informational/explanatory); and to inform, inspire, persuade, or entertain (narrative).

Production and Distribution of Writing

This set of anchor standards involves the stages of the writing process. These standards also highlight the importance of knowing who the audience is and the style and format the writer should use to achieve a purpose. Students also learn the skills needed throughout the writing process: generating ideas, trying other styles,

structures, perspectives, or processes as they bring their ideas into focus and some final form. Finally, these standards call for writers to use technology not only to publish but to collaborate throughout the writing process with others.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

These standards focus on inquiry processes of varying lengths, all of which should develop students' knowledge of the subject they are investigating and the skills needed to conduct that investigation. Students acquire and refine the ability to find, evaluate, and

use a range of sources during these research projects, which can take as long as a period to as much as a month. Such inquiries demand students correctly cite the source of all information to ensure they learn what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

Range of Writing

This standard emphasizes not only what students write but how often and for what purposes they write over the course of the school year. Writing, as this standard makes clear, is something students should be doing constantly and for

substantial lengths of time. Also, they should write for an array of reasons and audiences and in response to a mix of topics and tasks.

* These broad types of writing include many subgenres. See Appendix A for definitions of key writing types.

Writing 1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

9–10 English Language Arts

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- a. Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns.
- c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
- d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

11–12 English Language Arts

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- a. Introduce precise, **knowledgeable** claim(s), **establish the significance of the claim(s)**, distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization **that logically sequences** claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly **and thoroughly**, supplying **the most relevant** evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, **values, and possible biases**.
- c. Use words, phrases, and clauses **as well as varied syntax** to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
- d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

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Common Core Writing Standard 1

What the **Student** Does

9–10 English Language Arts

Gist: Craft arguments to support claims, analyzing complex texts or topics, all of which students support with sound reasoning and evidence that is both appropriate and adequate. Students begin by introducing a specific claim(s), which should be precise and distinct from other competing claim(s), establishing an organizing structure that clarifies the relationship between various claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. Students then examine the claim(s) and counterclaims without bias, pointing out the strengths and flaws of both sides in response to readers' forthcoming objections. Students choose words, phrases, and clauses that connect ideas, improve cohesion, and explain the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, reasons and evidence, and claim(s) and counterclaims. Students accomplish all the preceding through writing that is formal and objective in style and tone, and follows those rules established for different types of writing in each discipline. Finally, students create for the reader a conclusion that states their key ideas and supports their argument in a way that logically follows from all they said prior to the conclusion.

- What argument are you making about this topic or text?
- What alternate or counter claims do you include? And do you treat these fairly and develop them fully?
- What evidence do you provide to support your claim(s)?
- How would you describe the tone and style of your writing in this piece? Objective? Formal?
- How do the ideas in your concluding statement or section logically follow from all that you said prior to the conclusion?

11–12 English Language Arts

Gist: Craft arguments to support claims, analyzing complex texts or topics, all of which students support with sound reasoning and evidence that is both appropriate and adequate. Students begin by introducing a specific, insightful claim(s), which should be precise and distinct from other competing claim(s), establishing their importance and an organizing structure that imposes a logical sequence on and clarifies the relationship between various claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. Students then examine the claim(s) and counterclaims in depth, providing only the most pertinent evidence for both sides while pointing out the strengths and flaws of each in anticipation of readers' knowledge, objections, opinions, and biases. Students vary their syntax and choose words, phrases, and clauses that connect ideas, improve cohesion, and reveal the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, reasons and evidence, and claim(s) and counterclaims. Students accomplish all the preceding through writing that is formal and objective in style and tone, following those rules established for different types of writing in each discipline. Finally, students create for the reader a conclusion that states their key ideas and supports their argument in a way that logically follows from all they said prior to the conclusion.

- What argument are you making about this topic or text?
- What alternate or counter claims do you include? And are your claims knowledgeable, precise, and substantive?
- What evidence do you provide to support your claim(s)—and is it the most relevant?
- How would you describe the tone and style of your writing in this piece? Objective? Formal?
- How do the ideas in your concluding statement or section logically follow from all that you said prior to the conclusion?

Writing 1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

9–10 Social Studies, Science, and
Technical Subjects

Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.

- a. Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form and in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns.
- c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
- d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from or supports the argument presented.

11–12 Social Studies, Science, and
Technical Subjects

Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.

- a. Introduce precise, **knowledgeable** claim(s), **establish the significance of the claim(s)**, distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that **logically sequences** the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly **and thoroughly**, supplying **the most relevant** data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, **values, and possible biases**.
- c. Use words, phrases, and clauses **as well as varied syntax** to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
- d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from or supports the argument presented.

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Common Core Writing Standard 1

What the **Student** Does

9–10 Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Gist: Craft arguments about discipline-specific content, which students support with sound reasoning and evidence that is both appropriate and adequate. Students begin by introducing a specific claim(s), which should be precise and distinct from other competing claim(s), establishing an organizing structure that clarifies the relationship between various claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. Students then examine the claim(s) and counterclaims without bias, pointing out the strengths and flaws of both sides in response to readers' forthcoming objections. Students choose words, phrases, and clauses that connect ideas, improve cohesion, and explain the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, reasons and evidence, and claim(s) and counterclaims. Students accomplish all the preceding through writing that is formal and objective in style and tone, and follows those rules established for different types of writing in each discipline. Finally, students create for the reader a conclusion that states their key ideas and supports their argument in a way that logically follows from all they said prior to the conclusion.

- What argument are you making about this topic or text?
- What alternate or counter claims do you include? And do you treat these fairly and develop them fully?
- What evidence do you provide to support your claim(s)?
- How would you describe the tone and style of your writing in this piece? Objective? Formal?
- How do the ideas in your concluding statement or section logically follow from all that you said prior to the conclusion?

11–12 Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Gist: Craft arguments about discipline-specific content, which students support with sound reasoning and evidence that is both appropriate and adequate. Students begin by introducing a specific, insightful claim(s), which should be precise and distinct from other competing claim(s), establishing their importance and an organizing structure that imposes a logical sequence on and clarifies the relationship between various claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. Students then examine the claim(s) and counterclaims in depth, providing only the most pertinent evidence for both sides while pointing out the strengths and flaws of each in anticipation of readers' knowledge, objections, opinions, and biases. Students vary their syntax and choose words, phrases, and clauses that connect ideas, improve cohesion, and reveal the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, reasons and evidence, and claim(s) and counterclaims. Students accomplish all the preceding through writing that is formal and objective in style and tone, following those rules established for different types of writing in each discipline. Finally, students create for the reader a conclusion that states their key ideas and supports their argument in a way that logically follows from all they said prior to the conclusion.

- What argument are you making about this topic or text?
- What alternate or counter claims do you include? And are your claims knowledgeable, precise, and substantive?
- What evidence do you provide to support your claim(s)—and is it the most relevant?
- How would you describe the tone and style of your writing in this piece? Objective? Formal?
- How do the ideas in your concluding statement or section logically follow from all that you said prior to the conclusion?

What the **Teacher** Does

To develop students' ability to write arguments in their discipline, do the following:

- Provide students with a range of sample arguments so they learn to distinguish between effective and ineffective arguments.
- Have students read whole papers to see how writers use claims and evidence over the course of the whole text.
- Use structured note-taking formats (e.g., columns with headers such as claim, reason, evidence) in the early stages to help students understand the elements and see how they work together to support the argument.
- Give students sets of claims with varying degrees of specificity and insight; ask them to evaluate each by some criteria or arrange them all on a continuum of quality.
- Require students to label the elements of their argument (e.g., claim, evidence, reason), and evaluate the quality of each in light of whatever criteria are most appropriate on that occasion.
- Ask students to provide a list of possible counterclaims, alternative positions, values, or biases to consider when writing their claims or evaluating/responding to those of others.
- Generate questions to help students analyze texts and topics, evidence and reasoning, and claims and counterclaims when developing their claims or supporting them.
- Examine sentences for a variety of style and syntax, especially as these help clarify and emphasize the relationships and general cohesion between the different elements.
- Help students establish and apply criteria for determining the quality of topics and texts, claims and counterclaims, and evidence and reasons.
- Generate words that are appropriate to the tone, topic, and type of argument, as well as the audience,

occasion, and purpose; this can be done as a class, in groups, or independently.

- Invite students to use such techniques as backward outlining to assess the logic of their arguments within a paragraph or the whole text.
- Have students investigate how they might use data—statistics, surveys, or other quantitative information—to support their claims; include in this discussion why they should or should not do so.
- Keep and use both professional and student models for subsequent study of what to do—and what *not* to do.
- Develop a guide or scoring rubric based on the Common Core writing standard description for argument.
- Instruct students in how to gather and evaluate evidence when preparing to write (e.g., during the research or prewriting phase).
- Discuss with students the formats and styles used by different disciplines or on special occasions.
- Think aloud about an effective and ineffective model or some portion (e.g., introducing the claims) of the paper; you might display it on a big screen as you walk through it and point out what is and is not effective and why that is.
- Distribute highlighters or crayons, and then ask students to indicate those words that create cohesion by linking or serving as transitions between claims and reasons, reasons and evidence, and claims and counterclaims.

To help your English Language Learners, try this:

- Discuss the *idea* of argument, as it may be a foreign and even troubling concept for many students, given their culture's emphasis on respect for authorities and elders.

Notes

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Academic Vocabulary: Key Words and Phrases

Analysis: Dividing ideas, content, or processes into separate elements to examine what it is, how it works, and what it is made from.

Anticipate the audience: Writers must consider how readers will respond and what they will find offensive, confusing, or important.

Argument: Arguments have three objectives: to explain, to persuade, and to mediate conflicts between positions, readers, or ideas. Writers make logical claims—supported with reasons, evidence, and different appeals—to advance their argument(s).

Biases: Writers or readers favor one position over another; such prejudices and values are important for writers to consider or readers to be aware of (in themselves or writers).

Claim: This is a word with many apparent, sometimes confusing iterations: *proposition*, *assertion*, *thesis*; sometimes mistaken for same as *argument*. It is not the same as the subject or topic: A claim must be able to be argued and must require defense through evidence. Alternate or opposing claims suggest other, sometimes contradictory, claims one should consider. Effective claims are precise, clear, properly qualified, and affirmative. A thesis statement is the writer's main claim.

Clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons: Writers should have a reason for the claim(s) they make. They think X (*the claim*) is true because of Y (*a reason*). This relationship between claims and reasons should be based on evidence, not opinions or preferences.

Cohesion: One idea or sentence connects to another to create a sense of flow; reasons, claims, evidence, and ideas all work together.

Concluding statement or section: Writers provide some statement or section that connects all the claims and evidence, and then shows how they support the argument presented in the paper or speech.

Distinguish: This means to perceive something as, to explain how something is, or to argue that it is different or distinct from others that seem, on the surface, similar.

Establish the significance of the claim: *Significance* is also sometimes replaced with *substantive*; however, both mean the claim should be important, based on real and thorough knowledge about the subject.

Evidence: Each discipline has its own standards for evidence, but most lists would include quotations, observations, interviews, examples, facts, data, results from surveys and experiments, and, when appropriate, personal experience.

Formal style: Writers use words and tone appropriate for occasion and audience; this includes a more objective tone to suggest some critical distance from the subject or claim.

Norms and conventions of the discipline: Disciplines have their own conventions for style, format, and presentation; this applies to which words and information writers use, to how the writer uses them, and to what tone is used when discussing them.

Organization: This applies to how information and ideas are arranged within the document in general and the paragraphs and sentences in particular. All should be organized to best support the claims made.

Reasons/reasoning: Writers must base their claims and ideas on more than personal preferences or opinions when constructing arguments; reasons demand evidence, information, and logic.

Substantive topics or texts: Writers are expected to be writing about compelling, important ideas or texts that examine big questions meant to challenge the reader.

Syntax: Varied syntax refers to how a writer arranges words, phrases, clauses, and sentences in length, patterns, and word order; such arrangements have both stylistic and rhetorical effects.

Planning to Teach: Writing Standard 1
What to Do—and How

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Writing 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

9–10 English Language Arts

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

- a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.
- e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

11–12 English Language Arts

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

- a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information **so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole**; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- b. Develop the topic **thoroughly by selecting the most significant and** relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- c. Use appropriate and varied transitions **and syntax** to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
- d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, **and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy** to manage the complexity of the topic.
- e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

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Common Core Writing Standard 2

What the **Student** Does

9–10 English Language Arts

Gist: Inform readers about or explain complex ideas, processes, or events in language that is clear, precise, and formal, incorporating and organizing only the essential details, facts, examples, and quotations needed to provide a thorough analysis of the content. Students begin by introducing the topic, organizing any major ideas and information in ways that connect and distinguish between different ideas, using formatting (e.g., headings, sidebars), graphics (e.g., figures and tables), and multimedia to enhance clarity and comprehension. Students then build and refine their topic by selecting those facts that are salient and well suited to their purpose, while making use, as needed, of other techniques such as extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, and other information or data that may be relevant. Next, students insert a variety of transitions where appropriate to connect ideas and details and improve cohesion and clarity. In addition, students write in the language specific to that discipline, using words with precision to resolve any confusion or make clear what to some is complex. Students accomplish all the preceding through writing that is formal and objective in style and tone, and follows those rules established for different types of writing in each discipline. Finally, students end their paper with a conclusion that logically follows from all that precedes it, discussing the meaning or importance of the topic and their ideas about it.

- What is your subject—and what are you saying about it?
- What ideas, details, or sources are most important to include?
- What are the purpose, audience, and situation for this writing?
- What organizational techniques and supporting transitions do you use to clarify and emphasize your ideas?
- How would you describe the tone and style of your writing? Objective? Formal?
- What are the main ideas you discuss or emphasize in the conclusion—and how do those relate with all that preceded them?

11–12 English Language Arts

Gist: Inform readers about or explain complex ideas, processes, or events in language that is clear, precise, and formal, incorporating and organizing only the essential details, facts, examples, and quotations needed to provide a thorough analysis of the content. Students begin by introducing the topic, organizing any major ideas and information in ways that allow new elements to complement what precedes them and achieve a cohesive whole; they also connect and distinguish between different ideas, using formatting (e.g., headings, sidebars), graphics (e.g., figures and tables), and multimedia to enhance clarity and comprehension. Students then build and refine their topic in depth by choosing only those facts that are most salient and well suited to their purpose, while making use, as needed, of other techniques such as extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, and other information or data that may be relevant. Next, students insert a variety of transitions and syntax where appropriate to join important sections of the text and improve cohesion and clarity among significant ideas. In addition, students write in the language specific to that discipline, using such devices as metaphor, simile, and analogy to resolve any confusion or make clear what to some is complex. Students accomplish all the preceding through writing that is formal and objective in style and tone, and follows those rules established for different types of writing in each discipline. Finally, students end their paper with a conclusion that logically follows from all that precedes it, discussing the meaning or importance of the topic and their ideas about it.

- What is your subject—and what are you saying about it?
- What ideas, details, or sources are most important to include—and how do those you include build on each other to create a unified whole?
- What criteria should you apply when choosing which facts, details, or other information to include?
- How do you vary the syntax and use transitions to clarify and emphasize your ideas?
- What domain-specific language or figurative speech do you use to manage the complexity of this topic?
- How would you describe the tone and style of your writing? Objective? Formal?
- What are the main ideas you discuss or emphasize in the conclusion—and how do those relate with all that preceded them?

Writing 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

9–10 Social Studies, Science, and
Technical Subjects

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

- a. Introduce a topic and organize ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- c. Use varied transitions and sentence structures to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic and convey a style appropriate to the discipline and context as well as to the expertise of likely readers.
- e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

11–12 Social Studies, Science, and
Technical Subjects

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

- a. Introduce a topic and organize complex ideas, concepts, and information **so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole**; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- b. Develop the topic **thoroughly by selecting the most significant and** relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- c. Use varied transitions and sentence structures to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among **complex** ideas and concepts.
- d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary **and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy** to manage the complexity of the topic; convey a knowledgeable stance in a style that responds to the discipline and context as well as to the expertise of likely readers.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation provided (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

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What the **Student** Does

9–10 Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Gist: Inform readers about, explain, or narrate complex ideas, historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes. Students begin by introducing the topic, organizing any major ideas and information in ways that connect and distinguish between different ideas, using formatting (e.g., headings, sidebars), graphics (e.g., figures and tables), and multimedia to enhance clarity and comprehension. Students then build and refine their topic by selecting those facts that are most salient and well suited to their purpose, while making use, as needed, of other techniques such as extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, and other information or data that may be relevant. Next, students insert a variety of transitions where appropriate to connect ideas and details and improve cohesion and clarity. In addition, students write in the language specific to that discipline, using words with precision to resolve any confusion or make clear what to some is complex. Students accomplish all the preceding through writing that is formal and objective in style and tone, and follows those rules established for different types of writing in each discipline. Finally, students end their paper with a conclusion that logically follows from all that precedes it, discussing the meaning or importance of the topic and their ideas about it.

- What is your subject—and what are you saying about it?
- What ideas, details, or sources are most important to include?
- What are the purpose, audience, and situation for this writing?
- What organizational techniques and supporting transitions do you use to clarify and emphasize your ideas?
- How would you describe the tone and style of your writing? Objective? Formal?
- What are the main ideas you discuss or emphasize in the conclusion—and how do those relate with all that preceded them?

11–12 Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Gist: Inform readers about, explain, or narrate complex ideas, historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes. Students begin by introducing the topic, organizing any major ideas and information in ways that allow new elements to complement what precedes them and achieve a cohesive whole; they also connect and distinguish between different ideas, using formatting (e.g., headings, sidebars), graphics (e.g., figures and tables), and multimedia to enhance clarity and comprehension. Students then build and refine their topic in depth by choosing only those facts that are most salient and well suited to their purpose, while making use, as needed, of other techniques such as extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, and other information or data that may be relevant. Next, students insert a variety of transitions and syntax where appropriate to join important sections of the text and improve cohesion and clarity among complex ideas. In addition, students write in the language specific to that discipline, using such devices as metaphor, simile, and analogy to resolve any confusion or make clear what to some is complex. Students accomplish all the preceding through writing that is formal and objective in style and tone, and follows those rules established for different types of writing in each discipline. Finally, students end their paper with a conclusion that logically follows from all that precedes it, discussing the meaning or importance of the topic and their ideas about it.

- What is your subject—and what are you saying about it?
- What ideas, details, or sources are most important to include—and how do those you include build on each other to create a unified whole?
- What criteria should you apply when choosing which facts, details, or other information to include?
- How do you vary the syntax and use transitions to clarify and emphasize your ideas?
- What domain-specific language or figurative speech do you use to manage the complexity of this topic?
- How would you describe the tone and style of your writing? Objective? Formal?
- What are the main ideas you discuss or emphasize in the conclusion—and how do those relate with all that preceded them?

What the **Teacher** Does

To introduce students to informative/explanatory texts, do the following:

- Show them a range of examples—from students, professional writers, or even yourself—so they see what it is that you want them to do and get a sense of what they should include.
- Discuss the contents, conventions, and other elements of the type of informational/explanatory text you want them to write.
- Give students a copy of a sample text and, if possible, display it on a screen so you can annotate portions of it while discussing the writer’s decisions and the text’s relevant features.

To format and integrate graphics and multimedia into the text, have students do the following:

- Offer direct instruction to the whole class or a smaller group of students who need to learn how to use those features of the word processor or other software applications.
- Give students step-by-step directions or create a link to a web tutorial they can watch if they do not know how.
- Give them samples that show them different types of graphs, tables, and other options they might consider when incorporating information or data into their papers.

To develop their topic with details, examples, and information, have students do the following:

- Work directly with them to generate ideas and gather evidence, data, examples, or other content; then develop with them criteria for how to evaluate and choose the best of the bunch to work into their writing.
- Use sentence stems or templates from a book like *They Say/I Say* (by Graff and Birkenstein) to teach students how to introduce or frame the quotation and then comment on the meaning or importance of that quotation.

To have students use varied transitions to link ideas and create cohesion, do the following:

- Generate with students or provide them a list of transition words and phrases specific to the

type of writing they are doing (e.g., cause–effect, compare–contrast).

- Have students go through their papers once they have a complete draft and highlight the first six words of each sentence; then they can evaluate existing transitions and add others where they would improve clarity and cohesion.

To help students use precise language and academic vocabulary, do the following:

- Direct them to go circle any words in their papers that are abstract, too general, or otherwise ineffective; then have them generate words that could replace weaker words or phrases.
- Generate with the class words they might or should use when writing about a specific subject, procedure, event, or person; this might include specific verbs, nouns, and adjectives for use when, for example, explaining a process or procedure.
- Provide examples of or demonstrate for them how to use other techniques such as metaphors, similes, and analogies.

To establish and maintain the conventions for a discipline, have students do the following:

- Establish for the class the proper tone, format, and other genre conventions for the type of discipline-specific writing assigned.
- Give students a checklist or annotated sample that illustrates all the discipline-specific conventions they must include.

To prepare them to write about historical events, procedures, processes, or complex ideas, have students do the following:

- Discuss the ideas, details, or other contents that they should include to help them generate new ideas about what to say and how to organize it when they begin to write.

To help your English Language Learners, try this one thing:

- Break the process down into stages, providing students with examples and instruction at each stage before moving on to the next to ensure they understand and are doing the work correctly.

Academic Vocabulary: Key Words and Phrases

Analogy: Writers show how two things are similar to explain a foreign or complex idea to a reader. Analogies are a form of argument: The writer attempts to convince others the connection is true.

Audience’s knowledge of the topic: This phrase emphasizes clarity in writing; thus, if a writer ignores the audience’s lack or excess of knowledge about a topic, he or she risks confusing or insulting them.

Cohesion: This refers to how well things stick together to create a clear flow from one idea to the next. Generally, the beginning of a sentence should clearly connect to the words at the end of the previous sentence as the writing unfolds.

Complex ideas: Since students will be writing about an idea from multiple perspectives or drawing evidence from multiple sources to support their claims about a text or subject, writing about such complex ideas, which are often abstract, poses unique challenges.

Concrete details: This refers to specific details that refer to actual objects or places; it is the difference between Thomas Jefferson declaring the British guilty of “repeated injuries and usurpations” and listing the crimes committed by the British under its “absolute Tyranny” against the American colonies in the Declaration of Independence.

Distinctions: Writers distinguish between different ideas, characters, plot developments, or any other details to reveal those that contribute most to the work’s meaning.

Domain-specific vocabulary: When writing about any topic or text in a specific subject, writers must explain or describe it using the language of that discipline if they are to be accurate and precise.

Explanatory texts: Such texts are defined by their objective: to explain to or to inform the audience about a topic using facts and an objective tone; the writer’s role here is to report what he or she sees.

Extended definitions: Transcend basic definitions by discussing the qualities, history, value, and purpose

of whatever they are defining; also, often assign synonyms for the subject being defined.

Formatting: Today’s technology allows writers to emphasize ideas, connections, or other details through headers, fonts (style, size, and typeface), color, graphics, and spatial arrangement on the page.

Graphics: This includes tables and graphs, charts and images, and infographics, which incorporate many graphic elements to represent the complexity of a process, an idea, or an event.

Metaphor: This is one thing used to mean or represent another by comparing them in ways that are imaginative.

Norms and conventions of the discipline: Each discipline supplies requirements about how to write about and format documents in that particular subject. Literary analysis papers are written in the present tense; scientific papers have prescribed sections that must all be included and indicated with proper subheadings.

Objective tone: The purpose of informational writing is to inform or explain but not persuade. An objective tone maintains a distance from its subject, interjecting no emotions about the subject.

Selection, organization, and analysis of content: Writers choose the most important facts and details about the subject, organizing them to achieve a clear objective, then analyzing how those elements relate to one another and the larger idea of the paper in general, while also analyzing what each detail contributes to the meaning of that text.

Simile: The writer creates a new meaning by comparing one thing explicitly to another using *like*, *as*, or *as though*. Similes are less emphatic as a consequence of using *like* or *as*, which are indirect.

Transitions: They connect one sentence or idea to another, allowing writers to express the nature or importance of the relationship between those two ideas.

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