

Evidence-Based Writing



TOPIC TORNADOES

dangerous
destroy buildings
big storms
funnel-shaped
wind and rain

What are tornadoes?

How can I stay safe?

They are spinning columns of air.

Take cover in a safe place.

- *Supports the use of textual evidence to inform writing*
- *Provides practice for opinion, explanatory, narrative, and research writing*
- *Reinforces process writing through a five-page writing practice packet*
- *Includes a Common Core alignment chart and writing rubric*

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Introduction

Common Core writing standards focus on three main text types: opinion/argumentative, informative/explanatory, and narrative. A fourth category, research writing, is essential to any evidence-based writing program.

Research shows that effective writing strategies include every step of the writing process: prewriting/brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing/proofreading, and publishing. Students will be walked through these steps on pages 6–10. The Writing Practice Packet can be reused for additional practice by changing the topic.

The writing exercises in this book are designed to go beyond basic writing conventions. Students will learn how to base opinions on evidence, infer facts from relevant details, convey accurate background information, and recount real or imagined experiences. Students’ critical thinking skills are engaged when they do research, consider and analyze information, and respond to writing prompts. Writing prompts are paired with graphic organizers and followed by thinking/writing challenges.

Common Core Alignment Chart

Use this chart to plan instruction, practice, or remediation of a standard.

Common Core State Standards*		Practice Pages
Writing Standards		
Text Types and Purposes	4.W.1–4.W.3	11–63
Production and Distribution of Writing	4.W.4–4.W.6	11, 12, 14–18, 20, 23, 24, 30, 32, 33, 37–43, 45, 46, 48–50, 56, 57, 59–61
Research to Build and Present Knowledge	4.W.7–4.W.9	11, 12, 15, 18, 19, 21–38, 46–48, 51–63
Range of Writing	4.W.10	Adapt writing prompts to cover this standard.
Language Standards		
Conventions of Standard English	4.L.1–4.L.2	11–13, 15–17, 19, 21, 23–26, 30, 31, 33–38, 40–46, 51, 52–54, 56–63
Knowledge of Language	4.L.3	14, 18, 48, 49
Vocabulary Acquisition and Use	4.L.4–4.L.6	20, 22, 25, 27–29, 32, 39, 47, 50, 55

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About This Book

Use this book to teach your students to read closely, or to notice words, structure, and points of fact. The writing prompts that begin on page 11 are intended to engage students' interests and then to send them off on a hunt for more information. Graphic organizers will help students organize their thoughts and research notes. Their actual writing will take place on separate sheets of paper. Encourage students to share their writing with peers, teachers, and other adults. Show students how to use the Student Writing Checklist on page 5. Allow time for thoughtful revisions. Publication is an important Common Core component of writing standards; students should be given access to computers, tablets, or copying machines.

Common Core–Aligned Writing Rubric

Use this rubric as a guide to assess students' written work. You may also offer it to students to help them check their work or as a tool to show your scoring.

4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">_____ Offers insightful reasoning and strong evidence of critical thinking_____ Responds skillfully to all items in the prompt_____ Uses a logical organizational structure, including introductory and concluding paragraphs_____ Skillfully connects ideas with linking words and phrases_____ Uses vivid dialogue where appropriate_____ Skillfully supports topic(s) and opinions with evidence
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">_____ Offers sufficient reasoning and evidence of critical thinking_____ Responds to all items of the prompt_____ Uses introductory and concluding sentences_____ Uses dialogue where appropriate_____ Connects ideas with appropriate linking words and phrases_____ Supports topic(s) and opinions with evidence
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">_____ Demonstrates some evidence of critical thinking_____ Responds to some items in the prompt_____ Shows some understanding of paragraph formation_____ Connects ideas with simplistic linking words and phrases_____ Supports topic(s) and opinions with little evidence_____ Attempts to provide a concluding statement or a sense of closure
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">_____ Demonstrates limited or no evidence of critical thinking_____ Responds to some or no items in the prompts_____ Shows little or no understanding of paragraph structure_____ Presents ideas or events in random sequence_____ Does not support topic(s) or opinions with evidence_____ Uses few or no credible sources

Student Writing Checklist

Prewrite/Brainstorm

- _____ Consider and choose the topic for your essay.
- _____ Research your topic on the Internet, in books, or in magazines.
- _____ Take notes.
- _____ Summarize what you have learned.

Draft

- _____ Organize the essay by topics. Separate topics by paragraphs.
- _____ Provide an introduction, a body, and a conclusion in the essay.
- _____ Support opinions and points of view with reasons.
- _____ Develop the topic with facts and definitions.
- _____ Include details to describe thoughts, feelings, or actions.
- _____ Show evidence in your writing (*for example, because, The author said, I noticed on page _____, Based on what I read online*).

Revise

- _____ Write each sentence with a subject and verb.
- _____ Sequence events in the order they occurred.
- _____ Make sure sentence meaning is clear.
- _____ Use specific nouns, lively verbs, and interesting adjectives.
- _____ Use a variety of sentence structures.

Edit/Proofread

- _____ Indent each paragraph.
- _____ Capitalize the first letter in each sentence.
- _____ Capitalize all proper nouns.
- _____ Spell all words correctly.
- _____ Use proper grammar, including subject/verb agreement.
- _____ Use proper punctuation, including quotation marks.

Publish

- _____ Make sure your final copy is neat—no wrinkles, creases, or holes.
- _____ Erase any smudges or dirty spots.
- _____ Use good spacing between words.
- _____ Use your best handwriting or typing.
- _____ Include illustration(s) if appropriate.

Step 1: Prewrite/Brainstorm

Think about, plan, and organize your writing. Use the Internet, books, or magazines to find new information about your topic. Take notes.

Idea 1	<div>Choose a topic</div> <div style="font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold; margin-top: 10px;">Best Toy Company</div>	Idea 2	
Idea 3		Idea 4	
My choice			

<div>Reason 1</div> <div style="margin-top: 40px;">Fact/Example</div>	<div>Reason 2</div> <div style="margin-top: 40px;">Fact/Example</div>	<div>Reason 3</div> <div style="margin-top: 40px;">Fact/Example</div>
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Conclusion

Step 2: Draft

Use the information from the organizer on page 6. Write an essay about your topic. Remember to give reasons to support your opinion. Use linking words or phrases such as *because* and *for example*. Separate your ideas into paragraphs. In your conclusion, restate your opinion.

[illegible]

Step 3: Revise

Read your essay. Then, answer the questions with *Y* for yes or *N* for no.

- _____ Did I start my story with an interesting introduction that will make readers want to read more?
- _____ Did I list reasons to support my opinion?
- _____ Did I use words such as *because* and *for example* to link my reasons with my opinion?
- _____ Did all of my sentences stick to the topic?
- _____ Did I include enough details?
- _____ Did I separate the essay into paragraphs?
- _____ Did I use exciting verbs?
- _____ Did I use interesting adjectives?
- _____ Did I use the same words too often?
- _____ Does my conclusion provide a good ending for the essay?

The best part of this essay	The part that needs a little work

Step 4: Edit/Proofread

Place a check mark before each item when you have checked your work.

My Essay

- _____ I have read my essay, and it makes sense.
- _____ My essay has a beginning, middle, and end.
- _____ I stayed on topic.
- _____ My sentences are easy for readers to understand.
- _____ I used a variety of words.

Capitalization

- _____ Each sentence begins with a capital letter.
- _____ All proper nouns begin with capital letters.
- _____ My title words, except for articles and prepositions, are capitalized.

Punctuation

- _____ Each sentence ends with the correct ending punctuation.
- _____ I have placed commas where they belong.
- _____ I have used quotation marks to show where speech starts and ends.

Spelling

- _____ I have checked to see that all of the words are spelled correctly.
- _____ I have looked up words when needed.

Grammar

- _____ My subjects and verbs match.
- _____ I have used suffixes and prefixes properly.
- _____ I have used italics or underlining to mark titles of works.

Peer or Teacher Editing Checklist

Ask another student or your teacher to look at your essay and circle *Yes* or *No*.

Is the first word of each sentence capitalized?	Yes	No
Are the proper nouns capitalized?	Yes	No
Does each sentence end with a punctuation mark?	Yes	No
Are the words spelled correctly?	Yes	No
Are the paragraphs indented?	Yes	No
Is the handwriting or typing easy to read?	Yes	No

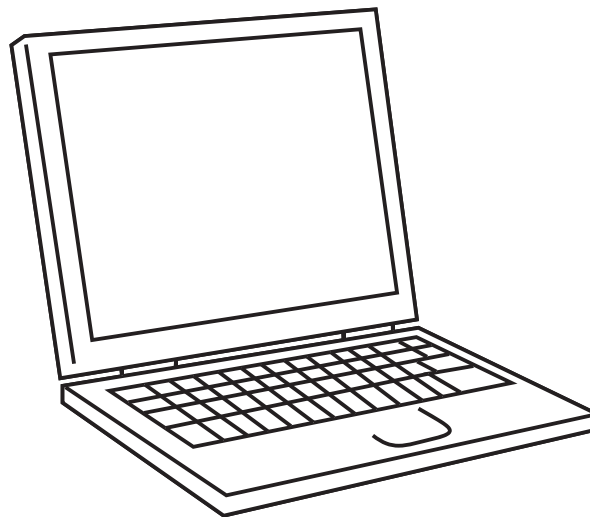
Editor's Name _____

Step 5: Publish

When you publish an essay or report, you make it possible for others to read it. Your readers might be teachers, students, or family members.

To publish an impressive essay or report, choose from these options.

1. I choose to publish my writing by
_____ writing it in neat handwriting.
_____ typing it on a computer.
_____ typing it on a tablet.
_____ copying it on a copier.
2. If I use a cover page, it will include
_____ the title.
_____ the author's name.
_____ the illustrator's name.
_____ art or decoration.
3. If appropriate, my presentation will include
_____ art or illustration(s).
_____ captions for the illustration(s).
_____ a graph, chart or time line.
4. I will share my writing with



Answer Key

Because writing is personal and presentations are unique, there are no “correct answers” to be applied to students’ work. However, students should follow the instruction of the writing prompts, complete the graphic organizers, and apply the steps of the writing process. Use the guidelines below or the Writing Rubric on page 4 to help you assess students’ work.

Pages 6 to 10: Writing Practice Packet

Check students’ work throughout the writing process practice pages. Help students master each step before going on to another. This process can be used with other writing prompts if more practice is needed before independent writing can begin. Refer students back to these pages as needed.

Pages 11 to 63: Reflect and Revise

These sections, at the end of each student page, ask the students first to reflect and to consider an alternative or additional slant to their topics. Often, it is requested that they add this additional layer of thought to their writing. Assess accordingly: First, check that they have fulfilled the challenge; second, check that their conclusions have been applied to the writing if asked. Because the Common Core language standards are tied so tightly to the writing standards, the second halves of these sections address various standards. Check through written work for mastery.

Pages 11 to 24: Opinion/Argumentative Writing

Check graphic organizers. Essays, reports, and letters will vary, but opinions should be supported with reasons and show evidence based on research, interviews, or recollection of experiences. Look for application of critical thinking and personal reflection.

Pages 25 to 40: Informative/Explanatory Writing

Check graphic organizers. Reports will vary but should be based on research and/or interviews. Look for an emphasis on fact rather than opinion. Information should be presented using the structure of an introduction, body, and conclusion. Facts should be grouped into paragraphs according to topic. If not evident, encourage students to connect ideas with linking words and phrases.

Pages 41 to 52: Narrative Writing

Check graphic organizers. Stories, essays, and other narrative formats will vary but should respond to all items in the prompt. Look for clear and logical sequences of events using a variety of transitional words and phrases. Stories should include a narrator and/or characters and provide setting details.

Pages 53 to 63: Research Writing

Check graphic organizers. Reports will vary but should be based on research and/or interviews. Assess students’ abilities to examine topics and convey ideas and information clearly to their readers. Students should use logical organizational structures, including introductory and concluding paragraphs.