

triumphlearning™

Common Core Coach

for
Composition I



First Edition

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Common Core
State Standards

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The Writing Process

Think about your favorite authors. How do they create those books you love to read? Do they just sit with a computer and type out whatever comes to mind, hoping that readers will find it interesting? Of course not! Good writers follow a writing process that helps them craft and refine their ideas.

In this lesson, you will learn about the individual steps of the writing process. As you explore what happens in each stage, you will

look at an example of another student's writing to see what he is doing well and where he needs to improve. You will also get to practice each step on your own as you respond to a writing prompt. Additionally, you will learn some important skills for using style and language in your writing.

By the end of the lesson, you should have a renewed understanding of what it takes to create strong and powerful writing.

What Is the Writing Process?

Writing is a vehicle for you to show what you know about a topic or text. In order to get credit for having great ideas, though, you must convey them in a focused, sophisticated manner. A well-written piece is the result of careful forethought and planning.

As you look at a writing prompt or assignment for the first time, your task may seem daunting. You may think: *How do I explain everything that's going on in my head in a way that my readers will understand? How do I show connections from one idea to another? On top of all of that, I have to make sure my writing uses correct spelling, grammar, and mechanics, too?*

It seems like a very tall order! That's why the best writers break their writing process into smaller steps. Each step has different elements for you to focus on so you will never get too overwhelmed by the task ahead of you. No matter what kind of writing you do, allow the following steps to guide you in composing a thoughtful and polished written piece.

1. Brainstorm

When you **brainstorm**, list ideas about a topic to get your writing started. As you jot down ideas, remind yourself of your purpose and consider how your audience will receive your response. Then begin to think about details you might include in your writing.

2. Plan

As you **plan** your writing, decide on a **thesis statement** and then gather and organize your ideas in written form, such as in an outline or graphic organizer. Consider which details will best support your thesis. Some forms of writing, such as a personal narrative, do not contain a thesis statement.

If you are writing a narrative, you will decide on your plot, characters, and setting at this stage.

3. Draft

Next, create a **draft** by writing an organized text with an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Carefully select language to convey your ideas in interesting ways, and make sure that your sentences and paragraphs follow a logical order.

4. Revise

When you **revise**, look for ways to make your writing's structure, ideas, and language all work toward the same goal. It is often helpful to have someone else review your writing in order to get additional feedback for your final draft.



5. Edit

To **edit** your writing, read it carefully to find and correct any errors in standard English conventions, including grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.



6. Publish

Finally, **publish** your writing so that other people can read what you have written. Publishing can mean anything from handing in a piece to your teacher to entering an online writing contest.

Writing Assignment

The following prompt asks you to write a personal narrative. Refer to this prompt as you work through the steps of the writing process.

Write about a time when you had to make a difficult decision. Describe the situation, the choices that were available, the decision you made, and the consequences of your actions. Looking back, would you have acted differently if given the chance? Use details and examples to explain and support your ideas.

► Brainstorm

Brainstorming is the very first step in the writing process. You won't be doing much actual writing of your composition at this stage. When you brainstorm, you activate your thoughts by writing down whatever comes into your mind about your topic. As you let your imagination go to work, some of your best ideas may emerge.

The prompts you encounter will vary. Some will be very specific, such as: *Write about an important person in your life.* Other prompts will be more general and will require more analytical thinking, such as: *Make an argument for a policy you think would improve your school.* Occasionally, you will write about a topic of your choice. In each case, you should brainstorm to decide how to approach the topic. Your goal is to narrow a broad topic to a specific topic that you can write well about.

Brainstorming can be a messy process. You may jot down a couple of ideas, cross one out, and then scribble a new idea in the margin. That's okay—it means your mind is hard at work. Don't worry too much about what you write during this step. Instead, write down all of your thoughts. That will make it easier for you to develop your ideas. Think of it this way: as you write, you are building a written text from the ground up. You don't begin by making the finishing touches; you begin by deciding what kind of structure you want to build.

Let's walk through the process by studying a mentor text. Look at how a student brainstormed for the following prompt.

Write about a time you faced a challenge that you overcame. Describe the situation, the specific obstacles you faced, how you overcame the challenge, and what you learned as a result. Use details and examples to explain and support your ideas.

Brainstorm a Topic

To choose and narrow your topic, you can do several things: freewrite, make lists, jot down words, create tables, or develop webs.

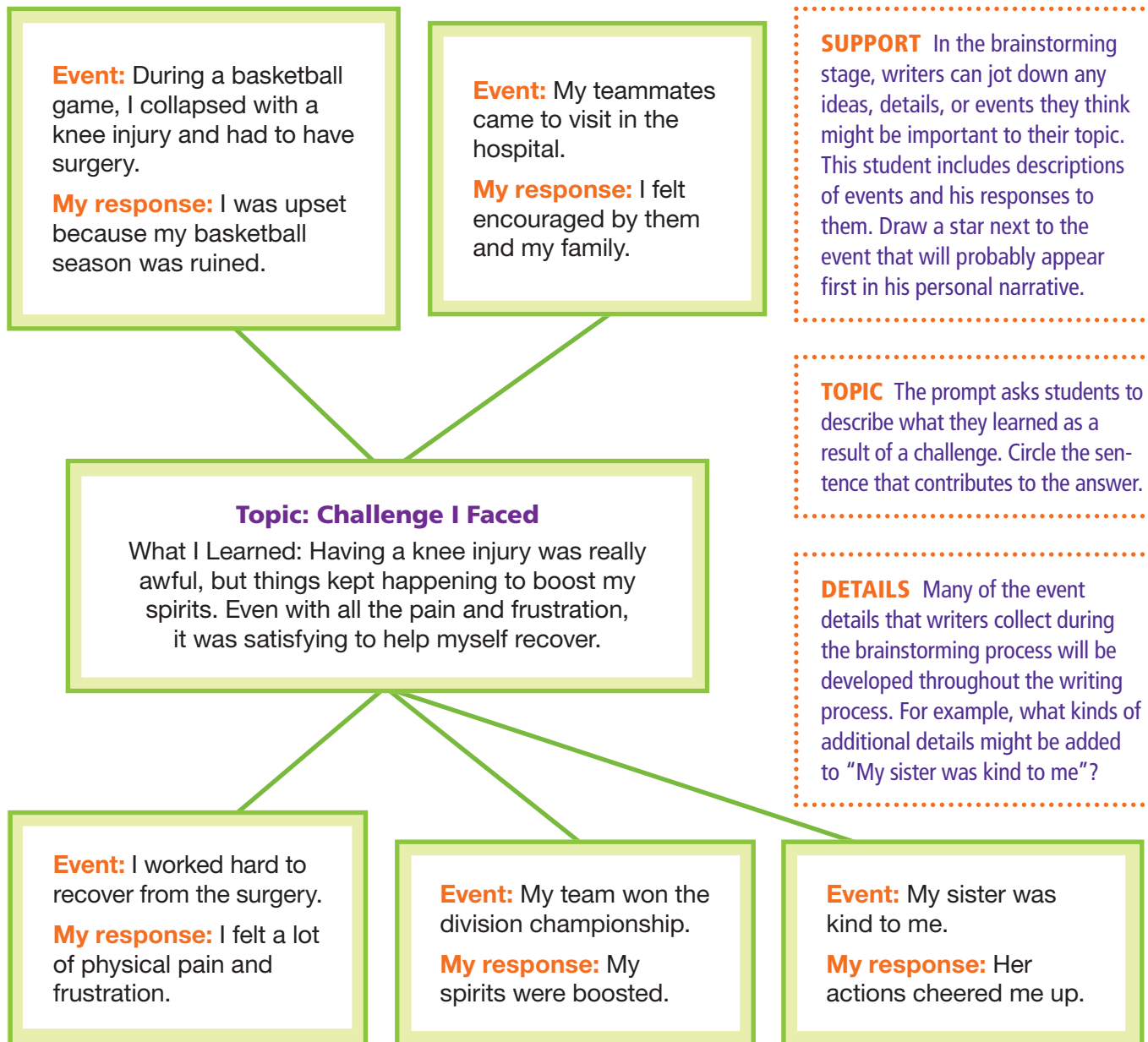
Here's how the student brainstormed to choose a topic for his personal narrative.

Topic: A time I faced a challenge	What I Learned as a Result
1. <i>Losing my dog in fifth grade</i>	I was so sad. Sure that Ollie was gone forever. Angry about the gate being broken. Ollie came home. I fixed the gate.
2. <i>Having surgery on my knee</i>	A terrible situation. But things kept happening to make me feel better. Ended well even with pain and frustration.
3. <i>Moving to a new house</i>	Didn't want to move to Chestnut St. Thought I'd never see my friends. Learned to make plans ahead of time.

Brainstorm Supporting Ideas

Once you have chosen the topic you'll use to respond to the prompt, brainstorm some more. As you select ideas related to that topic, make sure that you have enough material to complete your writing task.

The student decided to use a graphic organizer to brainstorm ideas for the topic he chose.



Writing Assignment

Now it's time for you to brainstorm for the prompt on page 7 that you will develop into a personal narrative throughout this lesson. Use a graphic organizer, a list, or another method to brainstorm ideas for your writing. You may use your own paper.

► Plan

In the **planning** stage, you set a direction for your composition. This means deciding exactly what you want to say about your topic and how you will say it. To do this, you should take the various ideas you came up with while brainstorming and then organize them into a plan that will guide you as you write.

When you plan your writing, first you need to decide what your **thesis**, or statement of your main idea, will be. What idea do you want to convey to your reader? The thesis indicates to your readers what information the rest of the response will communicate. As your writing progresses, you may find yourself reevaluating your thesis. This is normal, but it's a good idea to make sure you are fairly happy with your thesis early in the process. Different kinds of writing require different kinds of thesis statements, as shown in the chart below.

In a/an . . .	Your thesis will . . .
response to literature	present a concise analysis of some part of a work of literature.
informative text	state in a claim the results of your research.
argument	assert your position and preview your main supporting reasons.
personal narrative	present a topic or experience and provide a statement of reflection.

The next step in planning is organizing your ideas. One way to organize is to create an **outline** that clearly and briefly describes what you plan to include in the different parts of your composition. A typical outline includes headings and pieces of information below them, often with Roman numerals, letters of the alphabet, numbers, or bullets to label individual ideas. Once you have created an outline, it will keep you focused on your topic as you write.

When you develop an outline or any other type of plan for your writing, you do not have to write in complete sentences. Feel free to record your ideas in words and phrases. You are making a map to use as the basis for a stronger structure when you write a draft. In the draft stage and the stages following it, you can flesh out your paragraphs with well-constructed sentences.

Continue to think about who will be reading your writing (**audience**) and why you are writing (**purpose**) when you form your thesis and develop your writing plan.

Here is an outline the student prepared to organize the ideas he plans to include in his personal narrative.

I. Introduction

Thesis After my basketball injury, my life changed in unexpected ways.

- I pass the ball to Geraldo and he shoots; everyone is excited.
- I fall to the floor in pain.
- I hear my uncle's voice call for ambulance.

II. Support

Idea #1 I wake up in hospital confused.

- I learn about surgery during phone conversation.
- Mom cries.
- I feel terrible about basketball.

Idea #2 People respond to my surgery.

- doctor visits
- friends visit, make jokes, talk about winning
- Mom and other family often there

Idea #3 I spend a lot of time working to heal my knee.

- I feel a lot of pain—sweat, nausea, blurry vision

Idea #4 I go home from hospital and keep working.

- exercises
- moving on crutches

Idea #5 Each time I was discouraged, something made me feel better.

- team winning
- little sister being nice to me

III. Conclusion

- Team went on to win next game without me.
- I got to attend the game.
- I had a sense of satisfaction—knew that I had been changed by experience.

THESIS In the thesis statement of a personal narrative, the writer should introduce the experience he or she is writing about. Is this a strong thesis? Why or why not?

SUPPORTING DETAILS In an outline, you jot down notes about the supporting details you will use to support your main points. In a personal narrative, you will want to use descriptive details to make the events come alive for the reader. Circle two places in the outline where you can imagine the author developing descriptive detail.

CONCLUSION In the conclusion of this personal narrative, the student will reflect on what he has learned from the experience. Draw a box around the statement that shows that the student is already beginning to gather ideas about a reflection on his injury.

Writing Assignment

Now it's time for you to plan your personal narrative in response to the prompt on page 7. Using the thesis statement and the supporting details you generated during your brainstorming, organize your thoughts on a separate sheet of paper. Use an outline form you are comfortable with.

► Draft

In the **drafting** stage of writing, you form all of your ideas as well-constructed sentences and paragraphs with your audience and purpose in mind. These paragraphs must be organized in a logical way, or readers might not understand what you are trying to communicate. Luckily, you have already collected and organized many ideas in your writing plan. Now it is a matter of turning that plan into a well-developed response. Almost all writing you do will use a simple framework, including an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

- In the **introduction**, you clearly and briefly tell your reader what you are writing about. A strong introduction could grab the reader's attention by asking an intriguing question, by defining a term, or by providing an interesting fact or idea. Usually, an introduction contains a thesis statement.
- In the **body** of your writing, you tell your readers what you want them to know about your topic, using facts, details, examples, or quotations in structured paragraphs. Each paragraph should contain one key idea, followed by specific details supporting or illustrating that idea. You will want each of your paragraphs, in turn, to support the overall main idea of your writing. Paragraphs that wander too far from your thesis will distract your reader, weakening the piece.

Details may be arranged in chronological order, by cause and effect, by problem and solution, from general to specific, or in a variety of other ways. Choose the organizational method that makes the most sense for the kind of information you are presenting. Narratives often rely on chronological order to establish a sense of how events took place, while scientific or technical texts may be arranged by cause and effect to show how particular outcomes were reached. Arguments tend to have the strongest supporting ideas early on in the text, with weaker ideas toward the end of the text.

Within each paragraph, your ideas should flow easily. To help one idea flow into the next, use **transitions** such as *first*, *next*, *however*, *after*, *additionally*, *because*, and *therefore* to make connections. As you write your body paragraphs, try to use a variety of sentence types. Mixing short sentences with complex sentences will help avoid monotony and keep your readers engaged.

- Finally, a **conclusion** wraps up your composition by summarizing what you have said about your topic and perhaps by giving your reader something further to think about. For example, if you are writing a personal narrative, your conclusion may provide final details about an event as well as your own reflections on the event. In an argument, your conclusion will reassert your position and make a final appeal to the reader to accept your argument.

Here is a draft of the student’s personal narrative about facing and overcoming a challenge. This is a fairly late draft, after the student had time to revise and edit.

As I raced down the court with the ball, I quickly scanned my eyes to my left and saw my cousin Geraldo leaping into the air with his arms raised. As usual, Geraldo’s timing and mine were just about perfect. I took one quick step to the left and passed the ball, which Geraldo caught and shot in one fluid movement, sinking the basket. The fans in the gymnasium, my mother and Geraldo’s mother included, erupted. But just as I leaned forward to give Geraldo a high five, my left foot twisted and I collapsed to the floor. Sharp pain shot up my leg to my knee. The last thing I heard was my uncle’s voice shouting for an ambulance. What I didn’t realize was that I was just about to learn what really mattered in life.

When I woke up, I was lying in a hospital bed, very confused. I could hear the murmur of voices in the distance. My eyes were as heavy as lead, so I didn’t bother to open them for some time. As I became more alert, however, I could recognize my mother’s voice, speaking to my grandmother on the phone. “He collapsed during the game, and when they did some tests, they realized they had to do surgery right away.” Then I heard my mother begin to cry softly.

Surgery! We were one game away from winning the basketball championship in our division, which would send us to regionals. I had a lot more games to play in! This was my last year to play basketball with my cousin Geraldo, who was graduating in the spring. Also, I couldn’t let down my coach, who had given me the opportunity to play basketball when I transferred to Central High School last year.

But when Dr. Curtis came into my room an hour later, she confirmed that I had indeed had surgery on my knee and that my basketball season was over for this year. The pain throbbing in my knee was nothing compared to the agony I felt when she spoke those words.

The next morning, Geraldo and some of my other teammates came by to see me at the hospital. I expected them to be moping when they walked into my room, but instead, they came in laughing and making jokes.

“We’re gonna win this for you, Lee,” Geraldo said, giving me the thumbs-up sign. He even gave me a pat on the hand when nobody was looking. My mom was at the hospital most of the time, and other family members came by to cheer me on.

INTRODUCTION Did you notice how the student grabs readers’ attention by starting the narrative right in the middle of the action? Underline the sentence that first tells you where the event is taking place.

SENTENCE VARIETY Using different sentence types keeps the reader interested. This student uses a good variety of sentence types. Draw a wavy line under sentences in paragraph 2 that begin with the subject. Draw stars next to sentences that begin with introductory phrases.

DIALOGUE This student uses dialogue, or a speaker’s exact words, to help develop the body of the narrative. Do you think Geraldo’s line of dialogue is effective? Why or why not?

TRANSITIONS Do you see the different transitions the student uses to show the passage of time? Draw a box around any transitions in paragraph 7.

DETAILS Pay attention to how this student uses details to describe what happens during his recovery. Circle the details that help the reader imagine his sister's actions.

CONCLUSION To conclude the personal narrative, this student makes a statement reflecting on his experience. Draw two lines under this sentence in the conclusion.

But most of my time in the hospital was spent working. I had to slowly move my knee, little by little at first. Sometimes the pain was so bad that streams of sweat would start pouring down my face. Other times, I felt nauseated from the combination of medication and exhaustion. I'd look out the window of the room and everything seemed blurry.

After a week, I was discharged from the hospital, but my efforts had just begun. Next, I had to work for three days a week with a physical therapist, who gave me more exercises to do at home. I also had to learn how to walk around my house, and eventually the school bus and school building, on crutches. There were times when my arms throbbed and felt dead tired.

But every time I thought I could not take another minute of pain or frustration, something would happen to boost my spirits. Sometimes it would be something big—like my team dedicating the division championship to me. Other times, it would be something quite small, like my little sister Avi bringing me a glass of ice water and singing me a song she was learning in preschool.

Life went on. My basketball team went on to win the regional championship about a month after my injury. I was not on the court to help my teammates out. But I was sitting on the bench next to the coach, with my knee elevated on an extra chair. I had a feeling of strength in my heart because I had learned how much more important people were than sports.

Writing Assignment

Now it's your turn. Write a draft of your personal narrative on a computer or on a separate sheet of paper.

Write about a time when you had to make a difficult decision. Describe the situation, the choices that were available, the decision you made, and the consequences of your actions. Looking back, would you have acted differently, if given the chance? Use details and examples to explain and support your ideas.

Writer's Craft

Formal Style

When you are writing for school (and later, for work), you should use formal language. **Formal language** consists of correct grammar and carefully selected words that convey a sophisticated, professional style. It doesn't use slang or have an overly casual tone. For example, you would never include the following sentence in academic writing: "Katerina worked hard and completed a *totally legit* report on the discovery of DNA." Instead, you would use the word *excellent* or *superb*.

In the mentor text excerpt below, circle the words and phrases that use a formal style.

But when Dr. Curtis came into my room an hour later, she confirmed that I had indeed had surgery on my knee and that my basketball season was over for this year. The pain throbbing in my knee was nothing compared to the agony I felt when she spoke those words.

Though most writing you do in class requires a formal style, there are occasions when you can use more informal language. If you are writing a narrative, for example, you may wish to use casual language in your dialogue to reflect the way a person really speaks.

Try It

Read the sentences below. Rewrite each sentence so that it uses the appropriate formal style for writing in a school setting.

1. Those Congressional guys finally wanted to work out all that money stuff.

2. My mama's put in a lot of hours at the factory, which seems crazy to me.

► Revise

Revising is the writing stage in which you get to look at your writing from a different angle—as a reader! You have been brainstorming, planning, and drafting your content. Now look for ways to improve the focus, structure, ideas, and language.

When you revise, think again about the audience and purpose you identified earlier. Do your language choices fit the audience? Why are you writing? Is there content that should be adjusted to help you better fulfill that purpose?

Sometimes when revising, you may consider taking a new approach. For example, the mentor text is written from the first-person point of view, but personal narratives can also be written from the third-person point of view. Consider how a different approach might change your writing. Would it address your purpose?

Writer’s Craft

Precise Language and Concrete Details

As you revise your writing, use **precise language** and **concrete details** to convey and develop your topic. Include specific details and sensory language to create a vivid picture of experiences, events, settings, or characters. For example, the following sentence is from an early version of the mentor text.

I went down the court and looked for my cousin Geraldo.

Does this sentence help you to picture the experiences of the speaker? Adding sensory details would help the reader to relate to those experiences. Adding vivid action verbs would help the reader visualize events. Now read the revised sentence.

As I raced down the court with the ball, I quickly scanned my eyes to my left and saw my cousin Geraldo leaping into the air with his arms raised.

Now the reader can visualize the writer in the final moments before his injury.

When you are writing about a specific subject area or field, be sure to revise for **domain-specific vocabulary** that provides the right level of detail. For example, if you are writing an informational text about a parachute, you should use vocabulary that is specific and technical, such as *main canopy* and *pilot chute*.

Try It

Replace each of the vague phrases below with a more precise word or phrase.

1. my musical instrument _____
2. her car _____

Examining the organization of your writing is an important aspect of revision. Without a logical organizational structure, readers lose their way. When you revise for organization, ask yourself whether you should rearrange or add paragraphs that support your overall writing purpose. Sometimes you may find a paragraph that needs to come out altogether because it does not support the main purpose of your writing.

Take a look at each individual paragraph to be sure that there is one central idea that is supported by other details. If not, you will want to make changes. This may mean altering a topic sentence or providing more detail within a paragraph. Additionally, you want to be sure that your sentences are strong and varied. Do not try to make every sentence wordy and complicated. Check that you have used a good balance of longer and shorter sentences.

Finally, look through your draft for places where you may need to include transitional words, phrases, and sentences to help connect the ideas between and within paragraphs. Transitions are signposts that help show your reader where you are going and where you have been. Common transitions include *for example*, *but*, *although*, *however*, *as a result*, *first*, and *finally*.

Take a look at the following paragraph from the first draft of the narrative about facing a challenge. Then compare it to the same paragraph from the final draft to see what kinds of changes the student made when he revised his narrative.

First Draft

I was discharged from the hospital, but my efforts had just begun. Three days a week, I had to work with a physical therapist, who gave me more exercises to do at home. I also had to learn how to move around my house and eventually the school bus and school building on crutches. At times, my armpits hurt. But every time I thought I could not take another minute of pain or frustration, something would happen to boost my spirits. Sometimes it would be something big. Other times, it would be something quite small.

TRANSITIONS Transitions connect the ideas within and between sentences and paragraphs. A transitional phrase at the beginning of this paragraph would help the reader understand more about the student's discharge from the hospital. What transition might the student use?

PRECISE LANGUAGE Precise language is specific and descriptive, creating interesting and vivid prose for the reader. What words or phrases could the student use to better describe his pain from the crutches?

ADDING DETAIL To make ideas clear and to draw readers into a narrative, writers need to provide specific details to show what they mean. What could this student add to show the reader the kinds of things that happened to boost his spirits?

Revised Draft

TRANSITIONS The student added the transitional phrase *After a week* at the beginning of this paragraph, which tells the reader the time frame and moves the narrative to the next idea. Circle other transitional phrases the student uses in this paragraph.

PRECISE LANGUAGE Notice how the student changed *my arm-pits hurt* to *my arms throbbed and felt dead tired*. What does the precise language tell you about how the student was feeling?

ADDING DETAIL The student added specific examples of big or little things that helped to boost his spirits. Underline two examples of details the student added.

After a week, I was discharged from the hospital, but my efforts had just begun. Next, I had to work for three days a week with a physical therapist, who gave me more exercises to do at home. I also had to learn how to walk around my house, and eventually the school bus and school building, on crutches. There were times when my arms throbbed and felt dead tired.

But every time I thought I could not take another minute of pain or frustration, something would happen to boost my spirits. Sometimes it would be something big—like my team dedicating the division championship to me. Other times, it would be something quite small, like my little sister Avi bringing me a glass of ice water and singing me a song she was learning in preschool.

Try It

Revise a Draft

Now it is your turn to revise a paragraph from an early draft of the student's personal narrative. Read the excerpt below and write a revision on a separate sheet of paper.

I always loved basketball. Even as a kid. When I was six years old I begged my mother to buy me a basketball hoop for the driveway. Though we didn't have much room for it. I watched every basketball game shown on TV. I also watched football and hockey. When tryouts were announced for my school's basketball team, I knew I wanted to play. I was having a great time on the team until one game changed everything and nothing would be the same again.

Peer Review

When you conduct a peer review, you work with a partner to improve your draft. You will want to follow certain etiquette so that your interactions are constructive. The purpose is to improve writing; it is never a criticism of the writer. Writers, however, need to be receptive to criticism so that they can improve their writing.

Begin by telling your peers what works well in their writing so that they can use those techniques again. Be specific in stating why something works well. For example, “I liked the descriptive detail here because I could imagine that I was standing in the dark forest myself.”

Offer criticism as specific feedback related to the writing. Do not give vague comments, such as, “I don’t think it’s well written.” Provide specific problems and suggested solutions, such as, “I think you were trying to support the main idea here, but this detail is not clear. Can you restate it in more specific language?”

Another helpful technique is to ask peers to explain why they wrote what they did or why they used certain organization or language. This allows writers to rethink their own process and consider revisions as they talk to you.

Here are some questions that you can ask as you review a peer’s writing:

- Does the introduction grab the reader’s attention and reveal the main idea or thesis of the written piece?
- Does each body paragraph support the main idea or thesis and include effective supporting or descriptive details?
- Is the organization of the written piece logical?
- Does the conclusion summarize the main points or emphasize the author’s final ideas?
- Are the language and style appropriate for the audience and purpose?

Writing Assignment

Exchange your draft with a peer and use the peer review forms provided by your teacher to review each other’s work. Remember to be thoughtful and constructive in your comments, and take a few minutes to discuss your feedback with your classmate.

Once you are finished with your peer review, it’s time to revise your draft. Read through your draft with a critical eye and make changes using the revision checklist your teacher has provided or one of your own. Be sure to incorporate any helpful comments or suggestions from your peer review. You may compose your revised draft on a computer or a separate sheet of paper.

► Edit


















In the **editing** stage of writing, you make sure your revised draft follows the conventions of standard English. Editing involves checking that you have used grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization correctly.

There are several strategies that can make the editing process more efficient and rewarding. One strategy is to read your passage aloud—or have a classmate, friend, or family member read it aloud to you. As you hear the words, grammar mistakes will become more obvious to you. Additionally, if you read the text while a classmate reads it aloud, you may also notice spelling, capitalization, and punctuation mistakes more easily.

Some writers even like to read a text backward when editing, starting with the last sentence and reading each sentence by itself. When you look at the sentence in isolation, its strengths or possible weaknesses may become much clearer.

You probably know which mistakes you make most often when writing, so keep those in mind when you edit. For example, if you know that you often misuse commas, double-check your use of commas wherever they appear. Maybe you have a tendency to misspell the same words over and over. Be sure to look for those, using a dictionary to check difficult words.

Use these editing marks to correct any errors you find.

 Insert parentheses	 Insert em dash	 Close up space
 Add space	 Indent	 Insert
 Delete	 Insert hyphen	 Transpose
 Insert period	 Insert comma	 Insert apostrophe
 Insert quotation marks	 Capitalize	 Lowercase
 Insert en dash	 New paragraph	

This excerpt from a draft of a student’s response shows how the student used editing marks to make corrections.

□ When I woke up, I was ~~laying~~ in a hospital bed, very confused. I could hear the murmur of voices in the distance. My eyes were heavy as lead, so I didnt bother to open them for some time. As I became more alert, however, I could recognize my mother’s voice, speaking to my grandmother on the phone.

“[✓]He collapsed during the game, and when they some did tests, they realized they had to do surgery ^{right} ~~write~~ away.” Then I heard my mother begin to cry softly.

Surgery! We ^{were} ~~was~~ one game away from winning the basketball championship in our division, which would send us to the regionals. I had [#] alot more ~~more~~ games to play in! This was my last year to play basketball with my cousin Gerald^o, who was graduating in the spring. Also, I couldn’t let down my ^a ~~coach~~, who had given me the opportunity to play basketball when I ^{red} ~~transfer~~ to Central High School last year.

SPELLING This student confused the words *laying* and *lying*, a common mistake. How could he confirm that he is using the correct meaning?

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT The student made a subject-verb agreement error. He remembered that a plural subject needs a plural verb, and the verb form *was* is a singular form. Which word is the subject of this sentence? How does his correction fix the agreement error?

SEMICOLON The student used a semicolon incorrectly in the sentence. A semicolon is only used between independent clauses. Explain why a comma should be used here, instead.

Mechanics Review

Spelling

When you are drafting a piece of writing, it's easy to miss spelling errors. You will likely be so focused on your ideas, organization, and content that smaller mistakes might slip through. As you edit your draft, look carefully for spelling mistakes.

Here are a few spelling rules to remember.

- Put *i* before *e* except after *c* or when the two letters make a long *a* sound.
Examples: *relief, receive, weight*
- Add *-es* to words ending in *-s, -sh, -ss, -x, -z, -ch* to form plurals.
Examples: *mixes, watches*
- Change the *f* or *fe* to *v* and add *-es* to form plurals of words that end in *-f* or *-fe*.
Examples: *leaves, knives*
- Add the suffix *-ed* to a regular verb that ends with a consonant to make it past tense.
Example: *washed*
- Add the suffix *-d* to a regular verb that ends with a vowel to make it past tense.
Example: *pursued*
- Change the *y* to *i* and add *-es* to form plurals of words that end with a consonant and *y*.
Examples: *berries, follies*
- Keep the final *y* when adding the *-ing* ending whenever a single consonant precedes the final *y*.
Example: *pity + -ing = pitying*
- Change the *y* to *i* and add the *-s* and *-ed* endings when a double consonant precedes the final *y*.
Example: *carry + -ed = carried*
- Keep the final *y* and add the *-s, -ed, and -ing* endings when a vowel precedes the final *y*.
Examples: *stay + -ed = stayed; employ + ing = employing*

Remember to watch out for commonly confused words that sound the same or similar but have different meanings, such as *where* and *wear* or *their, there,* and *they're*.

Try It

Find the spelling error in each sentence. Write the word correctly on the line next to each sentence.

1. _____ Next weekend, my neice Sophia will be visiting me by herself.
2. _____ Which of the hats should William where to the baseball game?
3. _____ I am grateful for the lifes of all my grandparents, each of whom has taught me many important lessons.
4. _____ When the students went up to get there awards, the audience applauded.
5. _____ As the rain fell, the young woman hurried to her car.
6. _____ On our drive through the country, we passed several old churchs.
7. _____ Many familys gather for meals at holidays.
8. _____ The shelves at the grocery store were almost empty.
9. _____ The principal accompanied the seniors on their class trip.
10. _____ Despite their arguement beforehand, the twins threw a great party.

Writing Assignment

Now edit your personal narrative, using the editing checklist your teacher has provided you or one of your own. You may work either on your computer or on a separate sheet of paper.

Write about a time you had to make a difficult decision. Describe the situation, the choices that were available, the decision you made, and the consequences of your actions. Looking back, would you have acted differently if given the chance? Use details and examples to explain and support your ideas.

► Publish

When you **publish** your writing, you let other people read your work. Publishing is one of the most important stages of writing.

To publish your piece, first create a neat final draft using a computer or a separate sheet of paper, making any final corrections of errors you found while editing. Also, give your written text a title that captures readers' attention and effectively describes your work.

Now, think of ways to distribute your work to interested readers. This may mean turning in your piece to the teacher or letting friends and family read it. You can also try one of these ideas to find a wider audience for your written work:

- Form a writing club with friends, in which you meet and discuss each person's writing.
- Create a brochure or poster, with photos or illustrations, to publicize your writing and attract readers' interest.
- Submit your writing to your school newspaper for publication.
- Create a classroom magazine that includes examples by each student of the different types of writing: response to literature, informative texts, argument, and personal narrative.
- Meet in small groups to read your writing aloud, comparing and contrasting it with other students' writing.
- Submit your writing to a writing contest.

Technology Suggestions

- Upload your writing to your class Web site or blog.
- Save your work as a PDF document, and send it to family and friends through e-mail.
- Start a blog that discusses the topic of a recent writing assignment. Share opinions on the topic, and then analyze what you learned from the discussion.
- Record a podcast in which you read a piece of writing aloud. Invite classmates to contribute to a recorded discussion of the written text.
- Create a digital presentation of your writing, and share it with the class.

Writing Assignment

Once you have finished revising and editing your work, follow your teacher's instructions for publishing your final draft. Be sure to follow any formatting and submission guidelines your teacher or school may have.