

**The Struggling Writer: Writing for Real-Life**  
 Far West GREAT Region  
 El Paso, TX  
 Research, Development, and Presentation  
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 Bonnie Goonen

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*“Writing today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for the many.”*

National Commission on Writing, April 2003

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**Enhancing Writing Skills**

**Objectives**  
 Teachers will be able to:

- Use authentic materials to teach the basics of Edited American English (EAE).
- Apply strategies that will help students:
  - Write a well-constructed paragraph with a main idea and supporting details about a familiar topic or situation they encounter in real-life
  - Use writing for communication through a variety of formats, including letters, emails, reports, directions, etc.
- Use games and hands-on activities to teach grammar and the basics of writing

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**Enhancing Writing Skills**

**Let's Review!**

**Can You Find Them?**

**The Twelve Most Frequent Errors  
in Grammar and Punctuation**



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**Enhancing Writing Skills**

**An Effective Writing Program**

1. Integrates current theory and research
2. Integrates writing instruction into the curriculum of all subject areas
3. Accesses students' personal, social, and academic interests and experiences for subject matter
4. Requires that students write:
  - in many different forms (e.g., essays, notes, summaries, poems, letters, etc.)
  - for a variety of audiences
  - for a wide range of purposes (e.g., to inform, to persuade, to relax, to express themselves, etc.)

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**Enhancing Writing Skills**

**An Effective Writing Program**

5. Devotes class time to all aspects of the writing process (prewriting, organizing, drafting, revising, editing, and sharing)
6. Provides instruction in both developing and expressing ideas using the conventions of Edited American English
7. Teaches grammar and the writing process in context
8. Provides constructive responses and ongoing evaluation

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**Struggling Writers in the Classroom**

- Their questions
  - "What do you want me to write about?" "I don't know what to write."
  - "What if I can't write a whole page?" "How long does it have to be?"
- Your answers
  - "Brainstorm about the topic you've been given." "Plan your writing."
  - "Write enough to develop your topic." "Provide enough support for your topic."

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**A Strategy for the Struggling Writer**

**I Am a Poet!**

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**Struggling Writers: Their Solution**

- They begin to write (basically with minimal or no real planning).
- They lift the pen or pencil for a moment or two.
- They continue to write until they have "enough."

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### The Challenge of Helping Struggling Writers

- Generating content
  - Struggling writers do not know how to access what they know in writing.
  - They do not have as much difficulty when given the opportunity to "say" rather than "write" what they know.
- Making revisions
  - Less than 20% of revisions made by struggling writers change the original text.
  - Revision is more about word substitution, mechanical errors, or a neater product because these "rules" are concrete and therefore accessible.

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### Why Do Students Struggle?

- Struggling writers do not respond to the abstract terms that are a part of the writing process (brainstorm, plan, draft, and revise), even though they have received writing instruction.
- They need personal strategies that are specific and concrete.
- Self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) instruction helps students by offering concrete models for "what has to happen in the mind."

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### What Do Students Need to Know to Be Better Writers?

- Mechanics and Usage
  - Parts of Speech
  - Rules of punctuation
  - Sentence structure
- Words, Words, Words
  - Vocabulary
  - Spelling
- Writing Skills
  - Pre-writing
  - Organization
  - Editing and revising

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What Do Students Need to Know to Become Better Writers?

**Why I Write**

**I write to . . .**

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Teaching the Writing Process

Mnemonic Instruction

- Keyword Strategies
  - Giraffe
  - Hamburger
- Letter Strategies
  - DEFENDS
  - POWERS

Other Types of Writing Instruction

- 6 + 1 Traits
- Graphic Organizers



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Keyword Strategies: The Giraffe

Remember the giraffe!

- At the top, you have the topic sentence, which tells the readers what your paragraph will be about.
- In the middle is the body of your paragraph. This is where you write the sentences telling the readers what you want them to know about your topic.
- At the bottom is the end of your paragraph. This is where you write a sentence finishing your paragraph by summarizing what you told your readers.



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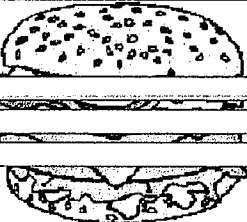
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### Keyword Strategies: The Hamburger

Topic Sentence



Detail

Detail

Detail

Conclusion

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### Letter Strategies: DEFENDS

- D** Decide on goals and theme
- E** Estimate main ideas and details
- F** Figure best order of main ideas and details
- E** Express the theme in the first sentence
- N** Note each main idea and supporting point
- D** Drive home the message in the last sentence
- S** Search for errors and correct



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### Letter Strategies: POWERS

- **P** is for Pre-Write
- **O** is for Organize
- **W** is for Write
- **E** is for Edit
- **R** is for Revise
- **S** is for Share



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**Letter Strategies: 6 + 1 Traits of Writing**

- Ideas
- Organization
- Voice
- Word Choice
- Sentence Fluency
- Conventions
- + 1 Presentation



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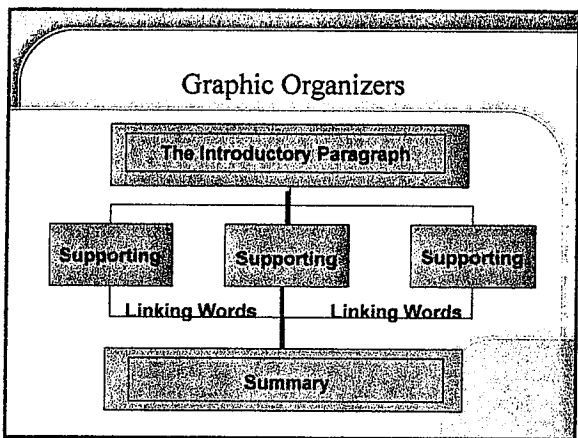
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**Enhancing Writing Skills: The Paragraph**

**Let's Start  
with the  
Paragraph!**

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**Enhancing Writing Skills: The Paragraph**

**Elements of a Paragraph**

- Unity
- Coherence
- Topic Sentence
- Adequate Development

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**Enhancing Writing Skills: The Paragraph**

- The paragraph is a series of sentences developing one topic.
- The topic sentence provides the main idea or thought of a paragraph.
- The rest of the paragraph consists of sentences that develop or explain the main idea.
- The concluding or clincher sentence
  - Restates the topic sentence in different words
  - Clinches the point made in the paragraph
  - Summarizes the paragraph

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**Developing a Paragraph**

A topic sentence may be developed by giving details.

A topic sentence may be developed by giving examples.

A topic sentence may be developed by telling an incident.

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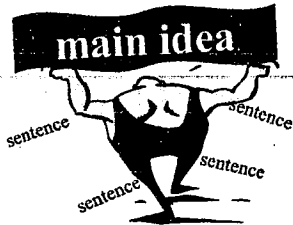
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### Unity in the Paragraph

Every sentence in a paragraph should support the main idea expressed in the topic sentence.




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### Coherence in a Paragraph

- Stick to the point: The ideas have a clear and logical relation to each other.
- Put details or examples or incidents in logical order.



chronological

in relation to each other

in order of importance




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### Connecting Sentences Within the Paragraph

#### Transition words

|                     |                                    |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| chronological order | objects in relation to one another | in order of importance |
| first               | next to                            | however                |
| meanwhile           | in front of                        | furthermore            |
| later               | beside                             | as a result            |
| afterwards          | between                            | in fact                |
| finally             | behind                             | yet                    |

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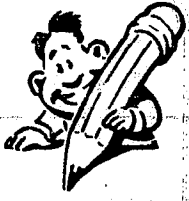
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### Types of Paragraphs

- The narrative paragraph
  - tells a story
- The persuasive paragraph.
  - tries to convince the audience
- The descriptive paragraph
  - describes something
- The expository or explanatory paragraph
  - gives information or explains something



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### Methods to Develop a Paragraph

- Use examples and illustrations
- Compare and contrast
- Cite data (facts, statistics, evidence, details, and others)
- Examine what other people say such as quotes and paraphrases
- Use an anecdote or story
- Evaluate causes and reasons
- Examine effects and consequences
- Analyze the topic
- Describe the topic
- Offer a chronology of an event (time segments)
- Define terms in the paragraph

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### Enhancing the Writing Process

## Let's Use Mathematical Patterns for Writing Paragraphs



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**The Writing Process**

- Beginning Paragraph: 1-2-3-4-0
- Detail Paragraph: 1-2-2-2-0 (3 details about the same topic)
- Longer Detail Paragraph: 1-2-2A-2-2B-2-2C-0 (ideas are expanded)
- Chronological Order Paragraph: 1-2-3-4-0 (same format as beginning paragraph, but different organization of thoughts)

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**The Writing Process**

**Writing Frame for Five Sentence Paragraph**  
**Pattern 1-2-3-4-0**

- Topic Sentence
- Detail #1
- Detail #2
- Detail #3
- Concluding Sentence

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**The Writing Process**

**Example of 1-2-3-4-0 :**

- 1 A baby is born helpless and learns to be more independent in time.
- 2 First, the baby learns to roll over and sit up.
- 3 Soon the baby can crawl.
- 4 Without the passage of much more time, the baby can walk and stand on its own two feet.
- 0 The helpless infant soon grows up to be a toddler.

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**The Writing Process**

**Let's Try It!**

**Writing Frame for Five Sentence Paragraph**  
A topic that fits easily is: Three reasons I like or dislike going to the grocery store.

**Pattern 1-2-3-4-0**

- Topic Sentence
- Detail #1
- Detail #2
- Detail #3
- Concluding Sentence

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**The Writing Process**

**Writing Frame for Five Sentence Paragraph**

**Pattern 1-2-2-2-0**

- Topic Sentence
- Supporting Detail #1
- Supporting Detail #2
- Supporting Detail #3
- Concluding Sentence

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**The Writing Process**

**Writing Frame for a Longer Paragraph**

**Pattern: 1-2-2A-2-2B-2-2C-0**

- Topic Sentence
- Supporting Detail (2)
- Support for Detail (2A)
- Supporting Detail (2)
- Support for Detail (2B)
- Supporting Detail (2)
- Support for Detail (2C)
- Concluding Sentence

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**The Writing Process**

**Real-Life Writing  
Writing Instructions**

**How to Make a  
Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich**

Is there anything you  
should have added?

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**The Writing Process**

**Focus on  
Making Better Writers,  
Not Just Better Writing**



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**The Six Traits of Writing**

- Ideas and Content
- Organization
- Voice
- Word Choice
- Sentence Fluency
- Conventions

• Note that assessment is embedded in all stages of the writing process.

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**Definitions /Explanations**

- **Ideas and content** are the heart of a writing piece.
- Key components to check for are **clarity** and an easily identifiable message.
- **Focus** is prevalent in a manageable and narrowed down topic.
- Quality of **details** are spotted beyond the obvious and general.

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**Explanations**

- **Organization** represents the internal structure and skeleton of the piece.
- Evidence of organization is found in an **inviting opening**.
- **Sequencing** ( logical and effective) helps link one idea/paragraph to another.
- **Effective endings** pull ideas together and leave the reader with something to think about.

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**Explanations**

- **Voice** is the author's fingerprints and personality on the page.
- Voice blends with it **flavor, tone, involvement, enthusiasm, and commitment**.
- Devotion and commitment to the topic runs through voice.

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**Explanations**

- **Word choice** focuses on the correct and accurate use of language
- Words are **vivid, precise, appealing, memorable, and noteworthy**
- Common words are used in an **effective and original manner** without over-reliance on a thesaurus or misuse of language

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**Explanations**

- **Sentence fluency** is the flow of the piece.
- The sentences should produce a cadence or a rhythm to the ear when read aloud.
- **Variations** in patterns, sentence beginnings, and differences in the sentence length are considerations.

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**Explanations**

- **Conventions** reflect the general correctness of the piece.
- Key components include **editing** and **proofreading**.
- **Mechanics** (spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage, and paragraphing) are other considerations.
- **Presentation** of the piece consists of neatness, format, and handwriting.

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The Writing Process

The P.O.W.E.R.S. of Writing

- P is for Pre-Write
- O is for Organize
- W is for Write
- E is for Edit
- R is for Revise
- S is for Share



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The Writing Process

Prewrite



- Journals
- Brainstorm
- Clustering/Webbing
- Doodle
- Freewrite
- Writing Prompts

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The Writing Process



*Time Out  
for Pre-Writing*

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**The Writing Process**

Organize

- Create an Outline
- Focused Free-write
- Arrange Ideas in Groups
- Cubing
- Answer the 5 Ws of Writing
- Number the Ideas

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**The Writing Process**

**Scrambled Paragraph**

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**Scrambled Paragraph**

- One of the central components of writing is the paragraph.
- When most students think of a paragraph, they hold onto the old myths about length, where a paragraph is a minimum of five sentences.
- A paragraph, however, is a group of sentences or a single sentence that forms a unit.
- Length or appearance is not a factor in determining whether a section in a paper is a paragraph.
- In fact, it is not the number of sentences that construct a paragraph, but it is the unity and coherence of ideas among those sentences that makes a paragraph a paragraph.
- For instance, in some styles of writing, a paragraph can be one sentence.
- As long as that sentence expresses the paper's central idea, that sentence can serve the function of a paragraph.
- Ultimately, strong paragraphs contain a sentence or sentences unified around one central, controlling idea.
- When the paragraph is complete, it should serve to bring the reader into your paper and guide his/her understanding of what has been read.
- Whether that completion happens with one sentence or with twenty, the end result is still a paragraph.
- Did you delete "The five paragraph essay is always the preferred choice for a completed composition."?

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

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The Writing Process

## Using Graphic Organizers for the Writing Process



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The Writing Process



## *It's Your Turn!*

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The Writing Process



Write

- Use Organized Ideas
- Choose Form of Writing
- Write 1<sup>st</sup> Draft
- Shape and Re-shape
- Apply different types of writing

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Enhancing Writing Skills

*Take the BORING out of Writing!*

*Try 100 Words...More or Less!*

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The Writing Process



*It's Your Turn!*

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The Writing Process

Edit



- Read It First Yourself!
- Possible Editors
- Editing Guidelines
- Feedback
- Answer the 5 Ws of Writing
- Number the Ideas

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Look for Common Error Patterns

- Trying to say too much in one sentence
- Writing short, choppy sentences
- Including more than one main idea
- Writing non-sentences or fragments
- Using incorrect grammar

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The Writing Process

**Editing Documents**



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The Writing Process



***It's Your Turn!***

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**The Writing Process**



**Revise**

- Review Feedback
- Make Changes/Improvements
- Write Another Draft
- Go Back and Forth Between Edit and Revise Steps
- Write Final Draft

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**The Writing Process**

- Editing
- Grammar
- Usage
- Mechanics

- Revising
- Unity
- Every detail in the writing supports a central idea--focus
- Coherence
- Transitional words, phrases, and/or clauses guide the reader

 **SUCCESS**

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**R ARMS: An Easy Way to Revise**

- **A**dd words, phrases, or more information to help make your points clear and easy for the reader to understand.
- **R**emove words that repeat themselves and information that does not relate to the main idea of your sentence, paragraph, or to the topic of the composition.
- **M**ove around words, phrases, sentences, or even whole paragraphs in order to keep your ideas clear and flowing toward a logical conclusion.
- **S**ubstitute words with more exact words or phrases that express what you want to say more clearly.

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**A Beginning Look at Evaluating Writing**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Overall Impression    |  |
| Strengths             |  |
| Areas for Improvement |  |

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**The Writing Process**



***It's Your Turn!***

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**The Writing Process**



**Share**

- Read Alouds
- Provide Copies to Others
- Display the Works
- Enter Works into Contests
- Have Works Published  
(School/Local Papers, Websites, etc.)

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The Writing Process



**How Do I  
Have Students Share?**

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The Writing Process



*It's Your Turn!*

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Enhancing Writing Skills



- It is not enough for writers to use correct verbs, nouns, pronouns, and punctuation in order to write effectively.
- Writers must compose with an audience in mind and craft that composition to ensure that the audience is able to understand and follow the writer's ideas.

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**The Writing Process**

**Create R.A.F.T.S.**

- **Role** – assume a different point of view
- **Audience** – write to a specific audience other than the teacher
- **Format** – develop using a specific genre or type of writing
- **Topic** – cover any topic assigned
- **Strong Verb** – write with more purpose

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**The Writing Process**

**R.A.F.T.S. Sample**

- **Role:** a bookkeeper
- **Audience:** company's manager
- **Format:** a one-page summary report
- **Topic:** current status of the company's income and expenditures
- **Strong verb:** persuade

**R.A.F.T.S. Prompt**

You are a bookkeeper for a small bakery that provides a variety of baked goods, including cookies, muffins, and brownies, to local childcare providers. The cost for ingredients, such as milk and eggs, has steadily increased over the past 6 months. However, there has been no price increase to local customers. The company manager has refused to increase prices because the manager is afraid that customers will switch to another bakery. After analyzing the costs and the income for the last six months, you know that something must change or the company will see a lot of red ink. Write your one page summary report so that it persuades the manager to take action.

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**The Writing Process**

**R.A.F.T.S. for Writing**

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**Enhancing Writing Skills**

*Workplace writing provides information and has a specific purpose and form unlike academic writing which is expected to convey knowledge and an understanding of content and process enabling the writer to explore new areas of thought. Workplace writing is designed to complete a work-related task.*

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**AT**

Authentic materials are print, video, and audio materials students encounter in their daily lives, such as change-of-address forms, job applications, menus, voice mail messages, radio programs, and videos, that can be used to create authentic tasks (AT). Authentic materials are not created specifically to be used in the classroom, but they make excellent learning tools for students precisely because they are authentic.

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**AT**

A task is authentic when:

- Students are asked to construct their own responses
- Task replicates challenges faced in the real world

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**Brainstorming Time!**

**What Authentic Tasks  
and  
Materials Do You Use?**

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**Sample Authentic Tasks**

- Send students on a "treasure hunt" to find grammatical structures or grammatical errors.
- Have learners rewrite headlines in the form of complete sentences, using proper capitalization and punctuation.
- Choose a photo in the newspaper and ask learners to write a few lines about the photo.
- Write a letter to the editor regarding an issue of importance to the community taking a pro or con stance.
- Write a letter of application for a job that is listed in the want-ads.
- Create a shopping list based on a store advertisement.

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**Enhancing Writing Skills**

**Writing Formats**

- Directions
- To-do lists
- Memos or letters
- Emails
- Proposals
- Graphic information such as charts, tables, graphs, and spreadsheets
- Newsletters
- Reports
- Speeches
- Resumes
- Text messages

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**Enhancing Writing Skills**

Real-world writing should be:

- Clear – easy to understand by the audience
- Accurate – factual, correct, and free of bias
- Correct – grammatically and technically
- Comprehensive – includes all of the information the audience needs
- Concise – does not have a lot of excess verbiage
- Accessible – is organized and has appropriate headings and subheadings

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**Enhancing Writing Skills**

**What Do Students Need to Know? Personally and in the Workplace?**

- Ability to communicate effectively verbally and in writing
- Ability to select and use language appropriate for the audience
- Ability to produce effective work-related texts

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**Enhancing Writing Skills**

**Emailing,  
Text Messaging,  
9 Keying – What's Next?**



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Enhancing Writing Skills

## Checking Your Email Etiquette




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## The Answer Please!

- Answer: B. Short paragraphs are easier to read. Also, they're less overwhelming because there is more white space between them.
- Answer: C. If you put more than one point in a paragraph, it may be overlooked. Lists and bullets make each of your points stand out.
- Answer: A. When people are in a hurry, they're less likely to open an attachment. Why? It takes extra time. People are more likely to read something that's right in front of them. To do this, you can either type directly in the message window, or compose elsewhere. Then, highlight the text, copy, and paste it into the window.
- Answer: C. The "cc" function is the most abused function in email. Don't be a pain!
- Answer: B. The more specific and descriptive you are, the better chance you have of getting the recipient to open the message.
- Answer: A. "Characters" are defined as every letter or space - anytime you hit a key or spacebar. The typical subject line will display only 25 - 35 characters.

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## Enhancing Writing Skills

### General Email Etiquette

- Be sure to include a meaningful subject line; this helps clarify what your message is about and may also help the recipient prioritize reading your email.
- Email like a written letter. Open your email with a greeting like Dear Dr. Jones, or Ms. Smith:
- Use standard spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. THERE'S NOTHING WORSE THAN AN EMAIL SCREAMING A MESSAGE IN ALL CAPS.
- Write clear, short paragraphs and be direct and to the point; professionals see their email accounts as business.

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### Enhancing Writing Skills

#### General Email Etiquette

- Use appropriate language and discuss appropriate topics. Email is not as private as it may seem. Without additional setup, email is not encrypted; meaning that your email is "open" and could possibly be read by an unintended person as it is transmitted to your reader.
- Be friendly and cordial, but don't try to joke around (jokes and witty remarks may be inappropriate and, more commonly, may be misinterpreted).
- Double check that you are sending your email only to the person or persons intended.

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### Enhancing Writing Skills

## Then There Was Text Messaging

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### Enhancing Writing Skills

*AYEC, I would like to have a F2F with you A3 about problems in the office. AAF, it is JMO that if we don't do something ASAP, we will have even more problems. The n00b is creating a major hassle over some of the office policies and has interrupted BAU around this place. BM&Y, I think the n00b should OOH. Sometimes I have to SMHID at problem. TLK2UL8R.*

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Feeling a Little Out of It?

**R u a text expert?**

**BBIAS**

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Enhancing Writing Skills

**How can you use current technology in the writing classroom?**

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Using Workplace Scenarios

**Scenario 2**

As part of your job, you are responsible for maintaining the supplies for the office. There are 36 staff members in the office and they use a lot of supplies. Each week, you do a quick inventory to see what needs to be ordered from the office supply store. Over the past few weeks, you have noticed that you have had to order more and more supplies of notepaper, pens, and pencils. In fact, it seems that those supplies are just flying out the door. The average cost of weekly orders has increased by over 25%. You are not sure what is happening, but your manager has asked to meet with you regarding the problem.

Select one of the following and prepare a written response.

- Provide a data analysis to the manager regarding the increase in supply costs.
- Write a summary of the problem and possible causes.
- Write a summary of the problem and possible solutions.

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### FTFOI (For The Fun Of It )

**Using Emoticons for Teaching Punctuation Vocabulary**

colon, dash, closed bracket

:-) = happy face

Semi-colon, dash, uppercase letter that comes after C

;-D = winking grin

At sign, two dashes, carrot, three dashes

@-^--- = a rose

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### Enhancing Writing Skills

**Teaching the Writing of the Workplace**

- Resumes
- Letters
- Memos
- Notes

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The other characteristic of full block letters is that every typed word is indented a proper amount to the left margin. Full block letters are a bit more formal than mixed block letters.

If your letter is only one page, type the complimentary close and address components at the bottom. (Do make a copy first on the page of your letter. For the components of two-number pages, see on the next page to go to page 2 of two letter.)

Secretary 11

4 Lines [Signature] 12

1 Line [Your Name Title] 13

1 Line [Identification Number] 14

1 Line [Reference Number] 15

1 Line [Name For Copy] 16

1.1.5\"/>

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### Organizing Your Letter

- In general, cover letters should be no longer than one typed page.
- Organize your body paragraphs to emphasize your strongest and most relevant qualifications. Only include the two or three strongest qualifications from your resume.
- Make it easy for readers to scan your letter by beginning each paragraph with a topic sentence.

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### One More Authentic Text

**Don't Forget  
the Newspaper!**

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### Enhancing Writing Skills

- Strategies for Incorporating Writing in the ABE/Literacy Curriculum
  - Use authentic tasks and materials
  - Teach students to write to a specific audience and from a different perspective
  - Teach patterns of writing
  - Use graphic organizers
  - Incorporate workplace scenarios
  - Have students write instructions
  - Practice, practice, practice

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The Writing Process

*Becoming a Better Writer Requires  
Practice, Practice, Practice!*

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Summing It All Up!

**Why I Write**

**I write to . . .**

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Far West GREAT Region

E-Learning Connections, Inc.

Research, Development, and Presentation

Bonnie Goonen

Susan Pittman-Shetler



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