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Date _____

Writing Strategies for Improved Communication

How the Heart Pumps Blood

The major organ of the **circulatory system** is the heart, which pumps blood throughout the body. The right and left sides of the heart are divided by a wall called septum. Each side is divided into two chambers called **atria** and the **ventricles**.

Oxygen-poor blood from the body enters the right atrium through large **veins** called the venae cavae. When the atrium contracts, it forces the blood into the right ventricle. Next the right ventricle contracts, forcing the blood into the pulmonary **arteries**, which carry it to the lungs. In the lungs the blood picks up oxygen. The oxygen-rich blood then flows through the pulmonary veins and back to the heart where it enters the left atrium. The left atrium contracts and forces the blood into the left ventricle. As the left ventricle contracts, it forces the blood into a large artery called **aorta**. From the aorta, blood flows into a system of blood vessels that carry it throughout the body.