Teacher Edition
Grades 6–8

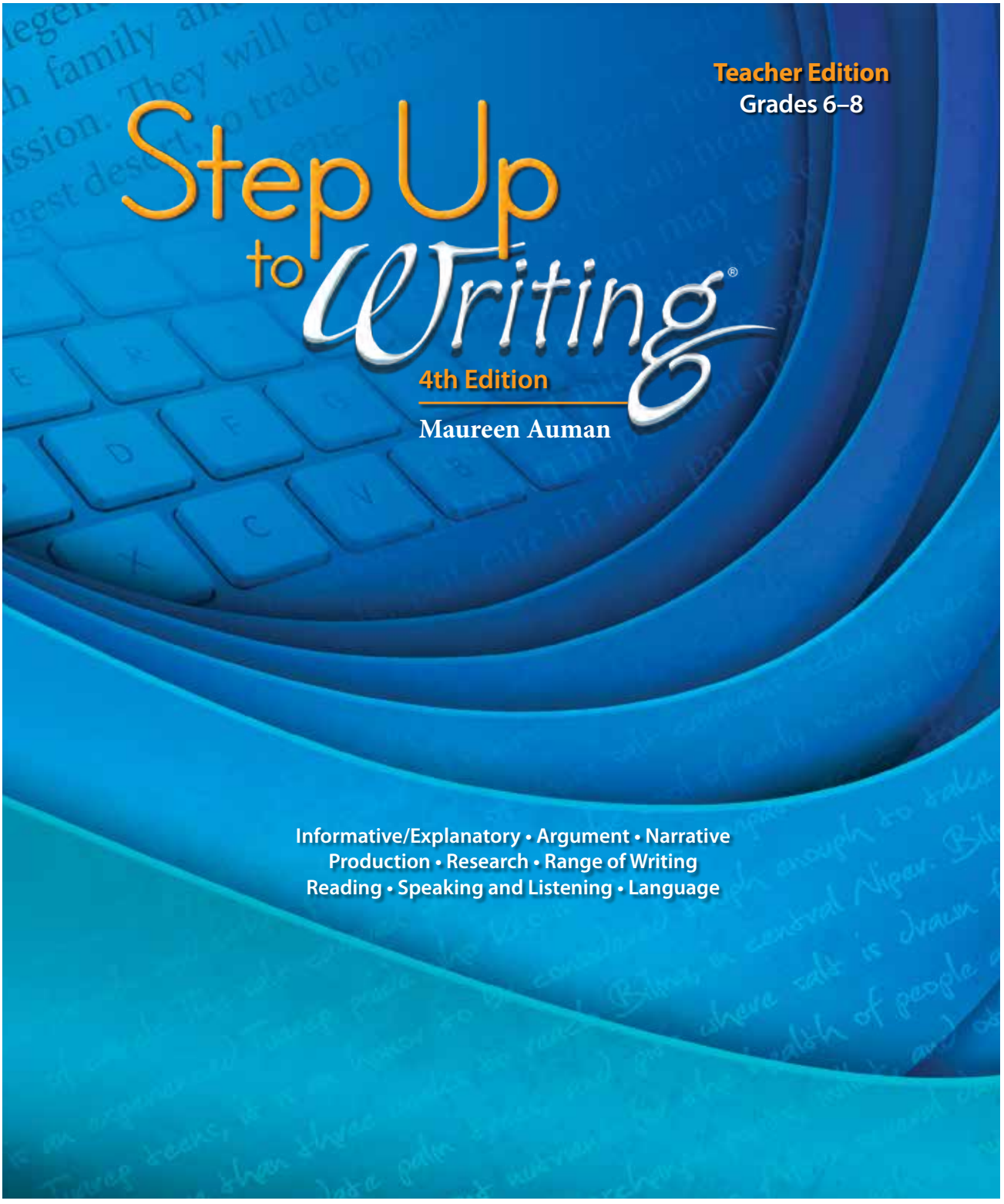
# Step Up to Writing®

4th Edition

Maureen Auman

Informative/Explanatory • Argument • Narrative Writing
Production • Research • Range of Writing
Reading • Speaking and Listening • Language

VOYAGER SOPRIS LEARNING

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## Meet the Author of *Step Up to Writing*

My journey with *Step Up to Writing* started in a classroom filled with eighth graders anxious to head to high school and nervous about passing eighth-grade exams. The challenge of preparing students to reach proficient or advanced levels on district and state writing assessments forced me to rethink the way I taught writing.

I analyzed the skills that students needed to master and broke instruction into small steps. Then, I taught these one at a time using direct, explicit instruction as well as a workshop approach. Students participated in active, hands-on lessons after seeing demonstrations on how to organize information, create topic sentences and introductions, and support topics with facts, details, and elaboration.

Test scores validated the improvements I saw in the classroom. More importantly, students were on task and willing to write. They liked the clear, simple directions that saved them time, provided a structure, and encouraged them to share their ideas.

*Step Up to Writing* 4th Edition has been developed to meet the rigor of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS ELA) while maintaining the same explicit instruction and workshop approach that first engaged and improved the skills of my students over two decades ago.

Word spread first among my fellow language arts teachers, then to the rest of the school, and eventually outside the district. Thousands of teachers in and out of the United States now use *Step Up to Writing* strategies every day in K–12 classrooms.

My hope is that *Step Up to Writing* 4th Edition will inspire even more teachers to make all lessons active and multisensory—guaranteeing the academic success of students everywhere.

Maureen E. Auman

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Welcome to *Step Up to Writing!*


**INTRODUCTION** . . . . . iii

Welcome to *Step Up to Writing!* . . . . . F8

Research-Based Instructional Design . . . . . F9

A Comprehensive Writing Program . . . . . F10

Alignment to the Common Core State Standards ELA . . . . . F11

What Can *Step Up to Writing* Students Achieve? . . . . . F15

How Does *Step Up to Writing* Support Teachers? . . . . . F17

A Guide for Using *Step Up to Writing* in the Classroom . . . . . F21

Schoolwide Implementation . . . . . F25


## 1 Writing to Improve Reading Comprehension . . . . . 1


**Responding to Text** . . . . . 5

**S1-1** Free Responses . . . . . 6

**S1-2** Response Starters . . . . . 7

**S1-3** Reading Notation Responses . . . . . 9

**S1-4** Sticky Note Responses . . . . . 10

**S1-5** One-Word Responses . . . . . 11

**S1-6** Agree/Disagree Responses . . . . . 13

**S1-7** Quotation Responses . . . . . 14

**S1-8** Framed Responses . . . . . 16

**S1-9** Two-Column Guided Reponses . . . . . 17

**S1-10** Quick Sketch Responses . . . . . 19

**S1-11** What Were You Thinking? . . . . . 21

**S1-12** Text Connections . . . . . 22

**Marking the Text** . . . . . 24

**S1-13** Highlighting and Underlining . . . . . 24

**S1-14** Mark Once . . . . . 26

**S1-15** Circle Once, Underline Twice . . . . . 27

**S1-16** Pick a Number . . . . . 29

**Taking Notes** . . . . . 31

**S1-17** Easy Two-Column Notes . . . . . 31

**S1-18** One Idea per Paragraph Note Taking . . . . 34

**S1-19** Using Two-Column Notes for Character Analysis . . . . . 35

**S1-20** Three- and Four-Column Notes . . . . . 37

**S1-21** Developing Study Guides . . . . . 38

**S1-22** Mapping and Webbing . . . . . 40

**Summarizing Text** . . . . . 42

**S1-23** Three-Column Notes with Summaries . . . 42

**S1-24** Four-Step Summary Paragraphs . . . . . 44

**S1-25** Plot Line Summaries . . . . . 47

**S1-26** Summaries without Words . . . . . 49

**S1-27** Money Summaries . . . . . 51

**S1-28** The 12-Word Trick . . . . . 53

**Analyzing Text** . . . . . 55

**S1-29** Making Inferences from Text . . . . . 55

**S1-30** Making Inferences and Analyzing Text with Two-Column Notes . . . . . 58

**S1-31** Making Inferences and Analyzing Text with Informal Outlines . . . . . 60

**S1-32** Making Inferences and Analyzing Text with Topic Sentences . . . . . 62

**S1-33** Using Graphic Organizers to Analyze Text Structure . . . . . 64

**S1-34** Comparing and Contrasting Texts . . . . . 67

**Using and Creating Bookmarks** . . . . . 70

**S1-35** Three-Column Burrito Fold Bookmarks . . . . . 70

**S1-36** Sticky Note Bookmarks: Respond and Summarize . . . . . 72

**S1-37** Two-Column Notes Bookmarks . . . . . 74

**S1-38** Reminder Cut-Apart Bookmarks . . . . . 75

**Progress Monitoring** . . . . . 77

**S1-39** Quick Check for Note-Taking . . . . . 78

**S1-40** Summary Writing Scoring Guide . . . . . 80

## 2 Foundational Writing Skills . . . . 83

**Introduction to Writing . . . . . 88**

S2-1 Introducing Three Types of Writing . . . . . 88
S2-2 Prompts for Three Types of Writing . . . . . 91
S2-3 The Writing Process . . . . . 93
S2-4 Prewriting: Brainstorming . . . . . 95
S2-5 Considering Purpose and Audience . . . . . 98
S2-6 Recognizing the Traits of Effective Writing . . . . . 100
S2-7 Collaborative Writing . . . . . 103
S2-8 Using Technology to Produce and Distribute Writing . . . . . 106
S2-9 Reinforcing Keyboarding Skills . . . . . 109
S2-10 Using Standard English . . . . . 111
S2-11 Proofreading . . . . . 114

**Masterful Sentences . . . . . 117**

S2-12 Recognizing Fragments, Run-Ons, and Complete Sentences . . . . . 118
S2-13 Sentences Telling Who, What, Where, When, Action, and How . . . . . 120
S2-14 Kinds of Sentences . . . . . 122
S2-15 Better Sentences . . . . . 124
S2-16 Sentence Structures . . . . . 126
S2-17 Sentence Variety . . . . . 129
S2-18 Writing Perfect Sentences . . . . . 132
S2-19 Choosing Precise and Concise Language . . . . . 134
S2-20 Using Punctuation within Sentences . . . 137

**Perfect Paragraphs . . . . . 140**

S2-21 Planning Paragraphs with Informal Outlines . . . . . 141
S2-22 Topic Sentences . . . . . 143
S2-23 Accordion Paragraphs . . . . . 145
S2-24 Perfect Three-Sentence Paragraphs . . . . . 148
S2-25 Using Transitions Effectively . . . . . 150
S2-26 Writing Cohesive Paragraphs . . . . . 153
S2-27 Improving Paragraphs with the ABC Activity . . . . . 155
S2-28 Learning About Elaboration . . . . . 157
S2-29 Analyzing a Paragraph . . . . . 160

**Conventions of Standard English . . . . . 163**

S2-30 Recognizing Parts of Speech . . . . . 164
S2-31 Learning Parts of a Sentence with Diagrams . . . . . 166
S2-32 Using Pronouns Correctly . . . . . 170
S2-33 Making Pronouns Agree . . . . . 172
S2-34 Making Pronoun Antecedents Clear . . . . 175
S2-35 Using Phrases and Clauses . . . . . 177
S2-36 Avoiding Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers . . . . . 179
S2-37 Using Verbals . . . . . 181
S2-38 Using Different Verb Moods . . . . . 185
S2-39 Avoiding Shifts in Verb Mood and Voice . . . . . 188
S2-40 Punctuating Quotations . . . . . 191
S2-41 Using Spelling Strategies . . . . . 194

**Progress Monitoring . . . . . 197**

S2-42 Neat Paper Rules . . . . . 198
S2-43 Quick Check for Sentences and Topic Sentences . . . . . 200

## 3 Vocabulary Acquisition and Use . . . . . 205

**Using Vocabulary Resources . . . . . 209**

S3-1 Reading Dictionary and Glossary Entries . . . . . 209
S3-2 Breaking Down Definitions . . . . . 212
S3-3 Using Pronunciation Guides . . . . . 214
S3-4 Using a Thesaurus . . . . . 216

**Practicing and Expanding Vocabulary . . . . . 219**

S3-5 Writing Meaningful Vocabulary Sentences . . . . . 220
S3-6 Vocabulary Maps . . . . . 222

S3-7 Concept Maps . . . . . 224
S3-8 Vocabulary Study Guides . . . . . 226
S3-9 Vocabulary Note Cards . . . . . 228
S3-10 Sorting Words into Categories . . . . . 230
S3-11 Recognizing and Using Multiple-Meaning Words . . . . . 231
S3-12 Using Context to Determine Meaning . . 234
S3-13 Using Relationships between Words to Determine Meaning . . . . . 236
S3-14 Using Word Roots to Determine Meaning . . . . . 237
S3-15 Using Affixes to Determine Meaning . . . 239
S3-16 Understanding and Using Allusions . . . . 241
S3-17 Using Verbal Irony and Puns . . . . . 243
S3-18 Figurative Language . . . . . 247
S3-19 Distinguishing among Connotations . . . 249
S3-20 Using Homophones and Homographs . . 252

**Progress Monitoring . . . . . 255**

S3-21 Vocabulary Assessment . . . . . 256

**4 Informative/Explanatory Writing: Stating the Facts . . . . 261**

**Planning, Organization, and Structure . . . . . 267**

S4-1 Color-Coding the Elements of Informative/Explanatory Writing . . . . . 268
S4-2 The Organization Game—Informative/Explanatory Writing . . . . . 270
S4-3 Planning with an Informal Outline . . . . . 272
S4-4 Informal Outlines of Various Lengths . . 274
S4-5 Accordion Paragraphs . . . . . 277
S4-6 Organization with Framed Paragraphs . . 279
S4-7 Elements of Accordion Essays and Reports . . . . . 281
S4-8 Writing Essays and Reports Step by Step . . . . . 283
S4-9 Informal Outlines for Essays and Reports . . . . . 286

**Introductions . . . . . 289**

S4-10 Defining Topic Sentences and Thesis Statements . . . . . 290
S4-11 Turning a Writing Prompt Into a Topic Sentence . . . . . 292
S4-12 Topic Sentence Variety . . . . . 294
S4-13 Adding a Lead—The Blues—to a Paragraph . . . . . 299
S4-14 Creating Two-Sentence Introductions . . 301
S4-15 Leading with the Blues . . . . . 303

**Develop the Topic/Elaboration . . . . . 306**

S4-16 Paragraph Elaboration—the E's/the Reds . . . . . 307
S4-17 Learning More About Elaboration . . . . . 309
S4-18 Comparing Paragraph and Report Elaboration . . . . . 310
S4-19 Increasing Elaboration in Essays and Reports . . . . . 312
S4-20 Stretch, Don't Stack Practice . . . . . 314
S4-21 Using Vocabulary Meaningfully . . . . . 316
S4-22 Adding Quotations . . . . . 318
S4-23 Gathering Information from Sources: Informative/Explanatory Writing . . . . . 321
S4-24 Definition and Function of Transitions . 324
S4-25 Transition Sets . . . . . 325
S4-26 Transitions for Different Purposes . . . . . 327
S4-27 Using a Variety of Transitions . . . . . 328
S4-28 Transitions in Essays and Reports . . . . . 330
S4-29 Transition Topic Sentences . . . . . 331
S4-30 Using Obvious and Subtle Transitions . . . . . 333
S4-31 Transition Topic Sentences in Longer Essays and Reports . . . . . 335

**Conclusions . . . . . 337**

S4-32 Conclusions—Defining Terms . . . . . 337
S4-33 Connecting a Conclusion to a Topic Sentence . . . . . 339
S4-34 Not All Paragraphs Require a Formal Conclusion . . . . . 341

**S4-35** Writing Successful Conclusions. . . . . 343
**S4-36** Practicing and Improving Conclusions. . . . . 345

**Incorporating Graphics and Text Features . . . . . 347**

**S4-37** Text Features and Formatting . . . . . 347
**S4-38** Graphics in Informative/Explanatory Writing . . . . . 349
**S4-39** Multimedia in Informative/Explanatory Writing . . . . . 351

**Revising and Editing . . . . . 354**

**S4-40** Sentence Variety. . . . . 355
**S4-41** Getting Caught in the *Things* Trap: Using Precise Words . . . . . 358
**S4-42** Revising Verbs in Informative/Explanatory Text . . . . . 359
**S4-43** Writing Meaningful and Precise Sentences . . . . . 361
**S4-44** Using Domain-Specific Language . . . . . 362
**S4-45** Editing Informative/Explanatory Text . . 364
**S4-46** Peer Review and Revision . . . . . 367
**S4-47** Analyzing a Paragraph . . . . . 368
**S4-48** Writing in First, Second, and Third Person . . . . . 370
**S4-49** Formal and Informal Style . . . . . 372

**Types of Informative/Explanatory Writing . . . . . 375**

**S4-50** Informative/Explanatory Text Structure: Definition . . . . . 376
**S4-51** Informative/Explanatory Text Structure: Classification . . . . . 378
**S4-52** Informative/Explanatory Text Structure: Compare/Contrast. . . . . 380
**S4-53** Informative/Explanatory Text Structure: Cause/Effect . . . . . 382
**S4-54** Informative/Explanatory Text Structure: Problem/Solution. . . . . 385
**S4-55** Forms of Informative/Explanatory Writing: Biographical/Autobiographical Sketches . . . . . 387
**S4-56** Forms of Informative/Explanatory Writing: Summary . . . . . 389
**S4-57** Forms of Informative/Explanatory Writing: Writing in Math . . . . . 392
**S4-58** Forms of Informative/Explanatory Writing: Science Reports. . . . . 394
**S4-59** Forms of Informative/Explanatory Writing: Technical Writing . . . . . 396
**S4-60** Forms of Informative/Explanatory Writing: Writing About Current Events. . . . . 398

**Progress Monitoring . . . . . 400**

**S4-61** Informative/Explanatory Paragraph Scoring Guide . . . . . 401
**S4-62** Informative/Explanatory Essay and Report Scoring Guide . . . . . 404

## 5 Argument Writing: Making a Claim . . . . . 409

**Planning, Organization, and Structure . . . . . 414**

**S5-1** Establishing a Claim . . . . . 415
**S5-2** Color-Coding the Elements of Argument Writing . . . . . 417
**S5-3** The Organization Game—Argument Writing . . . . . 420
**S5-4** Planning an Argument with an Informal Outline . . . . . 422
**S5-5** Accordion Paragraphs for Argument Writing . . . . . 425
**S5-6** Elements of Argument Accordion Essays and Reports. . . . . 428
**S5-7** Writing Argument Essays and Reports Step by Step . . . . . 431
**S5-8** Informal Outlines for Argument Essays and Reports. . . . . 434

**Introductions . . . . . 437**

**S5-9** Stating a Claim in a Topic Sentence or Thesis Statement . . . . . 438
**S5-10** Focus on the Audience . . . . . 440

S5-11 Introducing the Claim and Reasons in a Two-Sentence Introduction . . . . . 442
S5-12 Adding a Lead—The Blues—to an Argument Paragraph . . . . . 444
S5-13 Introducing a Claim and Leading with the Blues . . . . . 446

**Developing the Topic/Elaboration . . . . . 449**

S5-14 Facts vs. Opinions . . . . . 450
S5-15 Paragraph Elaboration in Argument Writing—The E's/the Reds . . . . . 452
S5-16 Increasing Elaboration in Argument Essays and Reports . . . . . 454
S5-17 Adding Quotations . . . . . 456
S5-18 Using the EITHER-OR Strategy in Argument Writing . . . . . 459
S5-19 The Opposing Claim . . . . . 461
S5-20 Gathering Information from Sources . . . 463

**Transitions . . . . . 466**

S5-21 Transitions for Argument Writing . . . . . 466
S5-22 Using Transitions to Connect Claims, Reasons, and Evidence . . . . . 468
S5-23 Using Transition Topic Sentences in Argument Essays and Reports . . . . . 470

**Conclusions . . . . . 473**

S5-24 Supporting the Claim in a Conclusion . . 473
S5-25 Writing Successful Conclusions for Arguments . . . . . 475
S5-26 Practicing Argument Conclusions . . . . . 477

**Revising and Editing . . . . . 480**

S5-27 Sentence Variety in Argument Writing . . . . . 481
S5-28 Getting Caught in the *Things* Trap: Using Precise Words in Argument Writing . . . . . 482
S5-29 Revising Verbs in Argument Writing . . . 484
S5-30 Editing Argument Writing . . . . . 486
S5-31 Peer Review and Revision in Argument Writing . . . . . 489
S5-32 First, Second, and Third Person in Argument Writing . . . . . 491
S5-33 Using a Formal Style in an Argument . . . 493

**Types of Argument Writing . . . . . 496**

S5-34 Persuasive Writing . . . . . 497
S5-35 Writing a Critique . . . . . 500
S5-36 Argument Text Structure: Compare/Contrast . . . . . 502
S5-37 Argument Text Structure: Cause/Effect . . . . . 504
S5-38 Argument Text Structure: Problem/Solution . . . . . 507
S5-39 Responding to Literature . . . . . 509

**Progress Monitoring . . . . . 512**

S5-40 Argument Paragraph Scoring Guide . . . . 513
S5-41 Argument Essay and Report Scoring Guide . . . . . 517

**6 Narrative Writing: Telling a Story . . . . . 521**

**Planning, Organization, and Structure . . . . . 526**

S6-1 Types of Narratives . . . . . 527
S6-2 Color Coding for Narratives . . . . . 529
S6-3 Introducing Terminology—Narratives . . 531
S6-4 Learning Story Elements . . . . . 533
S6-5 Six Steps for Writing a Narrative . . . . . 535
S6-6 Generating Ideas for Narrative Writing . . . . . 537
S6-7 Prewriting with Maps and Planners . . . . 539
S6-8 Quick Sketch and Quick Note Planning . . . . . 541
S6-9 Sequencing Events . . . . . 543
S6-10 Planning and Developing Characters . . . 545
S6-11 Planning for Changes in Characters . . . . 546
S6-12 Turning a Writing Prompt into a Narrative . . . . . 547
S6-13 Narrator and Voice . . . . . 550

**Beginnings** . . . . . 552

**S6-14** Ways to Begin a Narrative . . . . . 552

**S6-15** Three-Step Strategy to Write a Beginning . . . . . 554

**S6-16** RAFTS: Writing from Different Points of View—Narrative . . . . . 556

**Drafting and Using Narrative Techniques** . . . . . 559

**S6-17** Writing Dialogue . . . . . 560

**S6-18** Pacing in Narrative Writing . . . . . 562

**S6-19** Showing—Not Telling . . . . . 564

**S6-20** Narrative Description . . . . . 566

**S6-21** Including Reflection . . . . . 569

**S6-22** Eight Tips for Writing a First Draft . . . . . 571

**S6-23** Qualities of a Good Narrative . . . . . 573

**Transitions** . . . . . 575

**S6-24** Function and Variety of Narrative Transitions . . . . . 575

**S6-25** Analyzing Transitions . . . . . 577

**Endings** . . . . . 579

**S6-26** Options for Writing the Ending of a Narrative . . . . . 579

**S6-27** Connecting the Beginning and Ending of a Narrative . . . . . 581

**Revising and Editing** . . . . . 583

**S6-28** Revising Narratives . . . . . 584

**S6-29** Tips for Revising . . . . . 585

**S6-30** Peer Review and Revision: Narrative Writing . . . . . 588

**S6-31** Revising Verbs in Narratives . . . . . 590

**S6-32** Editing Narrative Writing . . . . . 592

**Personal Narrative** . . . . . 595

**S6-33** Forms and Purposes of Personal Narratives . . . . . 596

**S6-34** Recognizing the Personal Narrative Pattern . . . . . 598

**S6-35** Preparing to Write Personal Narratives . . . . . 600

**S6-36** Practicing Personal Narratives . . . . . 603

**S6-37** Personal Writing . . . . . 605

**Progress Monitoring** . . . . . 608

**S6-38** Narrative Scoring Guide . . . . . 609

**S6-39** Personal Narrative Scoring Guide . . . . . 612

**7 Research Reports** . . . . . 617

**Research Reports: Overview** . . . . . 621

**S7-1** Types and Purposes of Research Reports . . . . . 621

**S7-2** Elements of Research Reports . . . . . 623

**S7-3** Steps for Writing a Research Report . . . . 626

**Selecting a Research Topic** . . . . . 630

**S7-4** Generating a Research Question: What Do I Want to Know? . . . . . 630

**S7-5** Narrowing a Research Topic . . . . . 632

**S7-6** Generating Additional Questions . . . . . 633

**Finding and Evaluating Sources** . . . . . 636

**S7-7** Types of Sources . . . . . 636

**S7-8** Using Key Words to Find Online Sources . . . . . 638

**S7-9** Assessing the Usefulness of Sources . . . . 640

**S7-10** Assessing Digital Sources . . . . . 643

**Gathering Information, Documenting Research, and Planning Writing** . . . . . 645

**S7-11** Research Note Cards . . . . . 645

**S7-12** Comparing Information from Sources . . 648

**S7-13** Informal Outline for a Research Report . . . . . 650

**Writing a Research Paper** . . . . . 652

**S7-14** Tips for Writing a First Draft . . . . . 653

**S7-15** Using Quotations . . . . . 656

**S7-16** Paraphrasing Information from Sources . . . . . 658

S7-17 Avoiding Plagiarism . . . . . 659
S7-18 Using a Standard Format for Citation and Bibliography. . . . . 662
S7-19 Revising, Editing, and Finalizing a Research Report. . . . . 666
S7-20 Using Technology to Produce, Publish, and Present a Research Report. . . . . 669

**Progress Monitoring . . . . . 672**

S7-21 Research Report Scoring Guide . . . . . 673

**8 Speaking and Listening** . . . . . 677

**Organizing and Planning a Presentation . . . . . 681**

S8-1 Components of a Good Presentation . . . 682
S8-2 Informal Outline for a Presentation . . . . 683
S8-3 Blocking Out a Presentation. . . . . 686
S8-4 Including a Narrative in a Presentation. . . . . 688
S8-5 Consider the Audience . . . . . 690
S8-6 Planning Longer Presentations . . . . . 693

**Types of Presentations . . . . . 695**

S8-7 Making Introductions . . . . . 696
S8-8 Informational Presentations. . . . . 697
S8-9 Impromptu Informational Presentations. . . . . 700
S8-10 Process, Demonstration, and Instruction Presentations . . . . . 702
S8-11 Argument Presentations . . . . . 704
S8-12 Impromptu Argument Presentations . . . 707
S8-13 Oral Book Reports . . . . . 709

**Presentation Techniques . . . . . 713**

S8-14 Speaking Techniques. . . . . 714
S8-15 Effective Language for Presentations . . . 715
S8-16 Adding Multimedia and Visuals . . . . . 718
S8-17 Interpreting and Analyzing Presentations. . . . . 720
S8-18 Asking and Answering Questions . . . . . 722

**Collaboration and Discussion . . . . . 726**

S8-19 Good Listening Skills. . . . . 726
S8-20 Engaging Listening and Discussion Skills . . . . . 728
S8-21 Participating in a Discussion . . . . . 731
S8-22 Collaborating in a Group . . . . . 735

**Progress Monitoring . . . . . 738**

S8-23 Quick Check for Presentations . . . . . 739
S8-24 Quick Check for Group Collaboration . . . . . 740

**9 Writing for Assessments** . . . . . 743

S9-1 Great Short Answers . . . . . 748
S9-2 Using the Two-Column Study Guide to Answer Questions . . . . . 750
S9-3 Questions in Response to Text. . . . . 751
S9-4 Understanding and Using Scoring Guides . . . . . 755
S9-5 Extended Responses and Essay Questions . . . . . 759
S9-6 Writing for Narrative Assessments . . . . . 762
S9-7 Simulating Standardized Writing Assessments . . . . . 764
S9-8 Writing for Timed Tests and Assignments . . . . . 768
S9-9 Computer-Based Assessments . . . . . 770
S9-10 Recording and Monitoring Progress. . . . 772

**10 Writing in the Content Areas** . . . . . 775

Step Up to Writing in the Content Areas. . . . . 775
Quick Guides in the Content Areas. . . . . 776

**Glossary** . . . . . G1
**Index** . . . . . I1
**Bibliography** . . . . . B1

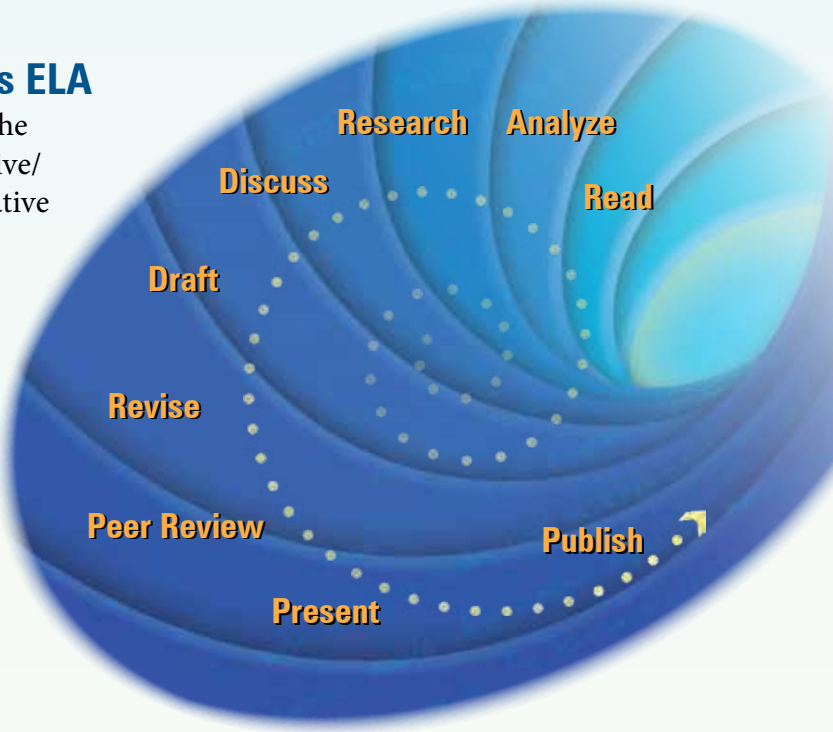
# Welcome to *Step Up to Writing!*

## Proven Instruction in Writing

- Explicit, systematic instruction in all aspects of writing
- Multisensory strategies to address all levels of student writing ability from basic skills in sentence and paragraph writing to developing research reports
- Emphasis on the use of standard English and formal style along with incorporating academic vocabulary in writing
- Development of deep reading for analysis and reflection to support writing
- Rigorous formal assessments that focus on writing in response to authentic texts similar to the new performance task standardized assessments

## Focused on the Common Core State Standards ELA

- In-depth practice for producing the three major text types—informative/explanatory, argument, and narrative
- Exemplar texts that reflect grade-level, content-area topics
- Strategies for peer review and collaborative writing
- Techniques for evaluating the accuracy and credibility of sources of information, online and in print
- Instruction in the strategic use of technology for research, collaboration, and publishing




## A Program for All Students

*Step Up to Writing* is for all students in grades 6–8 encompassing a wide range of abilities and learning styles. The program provides basic foundational strategies, such as how to write effective sentences and paragraphs, to more advanced strategies, such as how to write a logical argument based on reasons and evidence. Differentiated, multisensory strategies can be used to develop students' knowledge and abilities no matter what their levels of writing proficiency.

## A Direct, Systematic Approach

Learning to write well is more important than it has ever been. Writing is the key means students have to demonstrate what they know about a subject in addition to what they may have thought, felt, or imagined about life's experiences (CCSS ELA, 2011). Writing depends on several processes that operate together (Hays & Flower, 1980; Berninger, 1996; Berninger & Swanson, 1994). Each of the critical steps of writing must be taught directly (Gersten & Baker, 2001) and practiced repeatedly (Swanson, Hoskyn, & Lee, 1999) if students are to write coherently and fluently. *Step Up to Writing* provides a systematic approach that breaks writing skills into smaller steps. Each step is taught and practiced separately and then assembled and practiced together to reach the ultimate objective of composing a well-organized and engaging piece of writing.

With *Step Up to Writing* strategies grades 6–8, students have multiple opportunities to collaborate with peers in small groups or pairs in reviewing each other's writing and working together on projects.

*Step Up to Writing* incorporates the best practices of explicit and systematic instruction, collaborative learning, and scaffolded teaching that are associated with improved outcomes as identified in research (Gersten & Baker, 2001; Swanson, Hoskyn, & Lee, 1999; Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000). Skills in *Step Up to Writing* are sequenced, beginning with instruction and use of examples, then eliciting frequent verbal response from students. Modeling, guided practice, both short and extended interactive practice, and frequent feedback on student work ensure that students experience success in writing activities.

## Best Practices in Collaborative Learning

Students are provided numerous opportunities to collaborate with their peers by working in small groups or pairs as they learn new skills. After working collaboratively with their peers, students are able and willing to analyze and evaluate their own work (Boscolo & Ascorti, 2004). This allows students to be actively involved in their learning, engaged in problem-solving, and growing as writers as they plan, write, revise, and edit their work.

## New Emphasis on Text Types and Research

Strategies in each of the Teacher Edition sections are generally organized from basic to more advanced skills. The sections focused on the three text types—Sections 4, 5, and 6—have been organized by steps in the writing process. For grade-level implementation plans, see the *Step Up to Writing Assessment and Implementation Guide*.

**Introduce writing by starting with the strategies in Sections 1, 2, and 3 and continue to incorporate them as needed when teaching each text type.**

**1: Writing to Improve Reading Comprehension**

Skills in deep reading support the analysis and synthesis that underlie effective writing.

**2: Foundational Writing Skills**

Understanding the writing process and producing effective sentences and paragraphs are basic skills.

**3: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**

Writers need powerful vocabularies to write skillfully in the content areas.

**When teaching the text types, begin with informative/explanatory writing.**

**4: Informative/Explanatory Writing**

Writing to inform and explain establishes understanding of purpose, audience, and text structure.

**5: Argument Writing**

Making a claim and supporting it with reasons and evidence is critical to college and career readiness.

**6: Narrative Writing**

Nonfiction and fiction narratives convey a sequence of events in time and can inform as well as entertain.

**7: Research Reports**

Research report writing includes deep reading and synthesizing information from multiple sources.

**8: Speaking and Listening**

Strategies for presentation, discussion, and collaboration can be taught with any text type.

**9: Writing for Assessments**

Skills for understanding the Scoring Guides and writing for assessments can be taught with any text type.

**10: Writing in the Content Areas**

Strategies can be used to create ELA and content-area teacher partnerships.

## A Wide Range of Strategies and Tools

*Step Up to Writing* strategies grades 6–8 can be used to meet the grade-specific standards related to the Anchor Standards listed below for writing, speaking and listening, and language, as well as many of the standards for reading informational text and literature.

| *Step Up to Writing* Sections | CCSS ELA Anchor Standards Grades 6–8 |
|---|---|
| **1 Writing to Improve Reading Comprehension**<br>*Step Up to Writing* treats reading and writing as reciprocal skills: Writing helps students analyze reading; reading provides models of quality writing. Strategies in this section teach:<br>• Responding to texts, prompts, and questions<br>• Analyzing text and taking notes<br>• Summarizing text | **Reading: 1–3, 5**<br>**Writing: 9** |
| **2 Foundational Writing Skills**<br>Certain skills apply across all writing types. Students need foundational understanding of what makes effective writing, whether informative/explanatory, argument, or narrative. Strategies in this section include:<br>• Understanding the writing process and the three types of writing<br>• Writing masterful sentences and creating perfect paragraphs<br>• Learning conventions of standard English | **Writing: 4–6**<br>**Language: 1–3** |
| **3 Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**<br>Vocabulary is an essential literacy skill that improves reading comprehension and allows students to clearly articulate ideas. Strategies in this section teach the use of:<br>• Vocabulary resources (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries)<br>• Context clues and word relationships<br>• Figurative language<br>• Vocabulary note cards and maps | **Writing: 9**<br>**Language: 4–6** |
| **4 Informative/Explanatory Writing: Stating the Facts**<br>Learning effective informative/explanatory writing is an essential writing skill. Strategies in this section teach:<br>• Using color coding, outlines, and frames to visualize organization<br>• Developing strong topic or thesis sentences and conclusions<br>• Using transitional words and phrases<br>• Including and organizing relevant and significant details | **Writing: 2, 4–6, 9–10** |
| **5 Argument Writing: Making a Claim**<br>Effective argument writing is a skill students need to employ throughout their academic and workplace careers. Strategies in this section teach:<br>• Making a claim and supporting it with evidence<br>• Understanding the differences between opinions and claims<br>• Focusing on the audience to tailor argument writing<br>• Addressing an opposing claim | **Writing: 1, 4–6, 9–10** |

| *Step Up to Writing* Sections | CCSS ELA Anchor Standards Grades 6–8 |
|---|---|
| **6** **Narrative Writing: Telling a Story**<br>*Step Up to Writing* addresses the three types of narration: nonfiction, imaginative, and personal. Practice in this type of writing allows students to enhance their creativity and voice. Strategies in this section teach:<br>• The types of narratives<br>• How to establish context and point of view and introduce a narrator or characters<br>• Narrative techniques (e.g., dialogue, description)<br>• Transitions and organization specific to narrative writing<br>• How to include reflection, such as in the ending or conclusion | **Writing: 3, 4–6, 10** |
| **7** **Research Reports**<br>Research reports have characteristics of effective informative/explanatory and argument writing, such as a solid thesis statement, logical organization and reasoning, and a strong conclusion. Strategies in this section teach:<br>• Generating a research question<br>• Assessing the usefulness, credibility, and accuracy of sources<br>• Avoiding plagiarism and using proper references and citations<br>• Elements of reports and steps for writing research reports | **Writing: 4–10** |
| **8** **Speaking and Listening**<br>Speaking and listening skills are vital in any academic or workplace setting. Presenting information or opinions clearly in a formal presentation or informal discussion is increasingly important. Strategies in this section teach:<br>• How to organize and plan a presentation, including multimedia components<br>• Presentation and speaking techniques<br>• Collaboration and discussion skills | **Speaking and Listening: 1–6** |
| **9** **Writing for Assessments**<br>Writing for assessments is a fact of academic life. Strategies in this section teach:<br>• Skills for writing short answers, extended responses and essay, and narratives<br>• Understanding and using Scoring Guides<br>• Writing for timed tests and computer-based assessments<br>• Recording and monitoring progress | **Writing: 9–10** |
| **10** **Writing in the Content Areas**<br>With the adoption of the CCSS ELA has come an increased emphasis on writing across all content areas. *Step Up to Writing* is designed to support content-area teachers, in addition to ELA teachers. This section includes:<br>• Key principles in content-area writing<br>• A list of the core strategies in *Step Up to Writing*<br>• Quick Guides listing strategies to use in the content areas of math, science, and social studies, as well as a Quick Guide listing strategies for responding to literature | **Writing: 1–10** |

## Focused on 21st Century Literacy Skills

*Step Up to Writing* prepares students to be competent writers for the 21st century.

**With *Step Up to Writing* students can—**

### Write in response to a wide range of domain-specific text

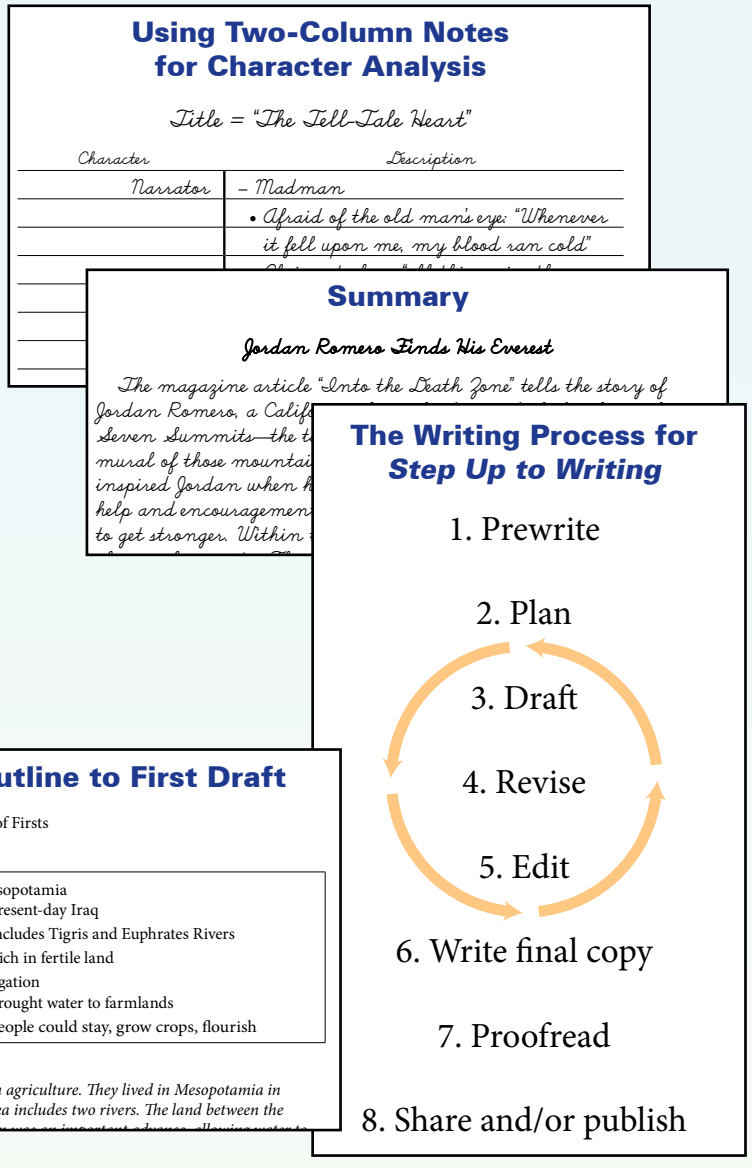
- Read critically
- Take notes
- Summarize
- Analyze text

### Follow the writing process to develop a topic

- Prewrite
- Plan
- Draft
- Revise
- Edit
- Final copy
- Proofread
- Publish

### Focus on task, purpose, and audience

- The three types of writing
- Point of view
- Formal style
- Precise words
- Tone and mood
- Figurative language



**Using Two-Column Notes for Character Analysis**

Title = "The Tell-Tale Heart"

| Character | Description |
|---|---|
| Narrator | – Madman |
| | • Afraid of the old man's eye: "Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold" |

**Summary**

Jordan Romero Finds His Everest

The magazine article "Into the Death Zone" tells the story of Jordan Romero, a Calif... Seven Summits—the t... mural of those mountai... inspired Jordan when h... help and encouragemen... to get stronger. Within ...

**The Writing Process for *Step Up to Writing***

1. Prewrite
2. Plan
3. Draft
4. Revise
5. Edit
6. Write final copy
7. Proofread
8. Share and/or publish

**From Informal Outline to First Draft**

**Title =** The Ancient Sumerians: A People of Firsts

**First Outline Section**

| | |
|---|---|
| ☆ **Agriculture (Transition: key advances)** | – Mesopotamia<br>• Present-day Iraq<br>• Includes Tigris and Euphrates Rivers<br>• Rich in fertile land<br>– Irrigation<br>• Brought water to farmlands<br>• People could stay, grow crops, flourish |

**Draft Paragraph**

*The Sumerians had some key advances in agriculture. They lived in Mesopotamia in the Middle East in present-day Iraq. This area includes two rivers. The land between the*

**Examples of Leads—The Blues**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Short Narrative** | **On the streets of small towns and big cities, flags waved, drums beat, and people cheered as men lined up to join the army. In the North and in the South, nervous young soldiers were marching off to war. They were all Americans, but they would soon be shooting at each other.** |
| | The Civil War (1861–1865) left more United States soldiers dead than any other war in U.S. history, before or since. About 620,000 soldiers lost their lives during the conflict. |
| **Question** | **What h...** |
| | In the r... result has b... |
| **A Bold or Startling Statement** | **A parro... smarter tha... words, and** |

**Topic Sentences and Thesis Statements**

| Examples | What is the Purpose for Writing (Main Idea)? | What Will be Explained? |
|---|---|---|
| **Environmental Science:** More than 25 invasive fish species are damaging the freshwater ecosystem in the Great Lakes by interfering with the food web, spoiling the coastal wetlands, and causing loss of plant diversity. | To give information about damage caused by invasive fish species | Three different ways invasive species are damaging the Great Lakes ecosystem |
| **Geometry:** When the lengths of two sides of a right triangle | | |

## Facts or Opinions?

**Directions:** Write F next to each fact. Write O next to each opinion. Then add your own fact and your own opinion to the list.

**Claim =** The public library should provide more public computers with access to the Internet.

_____ Free public access to the Internet in the library is a good use of tax dollars.

_____ A national U.S. Library Impact Study showed that more than 45% of library users access the Internet from their public library.

_____ Li
co

M

## Argument Accordion Essays and Reports

**Prompt:** Write a short one- to two-page essay on whether humans should clone extinct animals. State a claim and provide reasons to support it using scientific facts, expert opinions, and logic.

**Keep Woolly Mammoths Extinct**

**Introduction**

**Thesis Statement (Claim) The Plan**

In 2013, Russian scientists discovered the frozen carcass of a woolly mammoth. Because there was muscle and liquid blood still in the body, some people were hopeful that science could bring these beasts back from extinction through cloning. The thought of recreating extinct species may be exciting, but many experts and ethicists think it is wrongheaded.

**Body Paragraph**

**Transition Topic Sentence**

The biggest hurdle in reviving extinct species is the difficulty of cloning, especially from the tissues of long-dead animals. An organism's genome, which contains DNA, is the blueprint for its development and growth. The genome exists in almost every cell of an organism. Cloning requires a healthy, whole genome to recreate the organism. But when animals die, their cells break down very quickly. Since woolly mammoths died off thousands of years ago, chances are slim that scientists will be able to find an

**Elaborating**

## Peer Review Roles

**Directions:** Work with a partner. Each person chooses a piece of his or her argument writing to share. Together, decide whose piece to review first. Then both of you—the reviewer and the writer—analyze that piece. Sit with the paper or electronic file between you so that you can both see the text. After the first piece is reviewed, switch roles and review the other person's piece. The review can be oral, recorded on Tool S5-31b, or recorded on another scoring guide or rubric.

| Ro |
|---|
| • Listen wit writer read notes to he |
| • Begin you what you l |
| • Ask questi |

## Collaborative Writing Planner

Group members: _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

| | Tasks | Team Member(s) Responsible | Date D |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Step 1 Prewrite** | Brainstorming | All | |
| | Record plan on this sheet | | |
| | Other: | | |
| **Step 2 Plan** | Develop topic sentence or thesis statement | All | |
| | Other: | | |
| **Step 3** | | | |

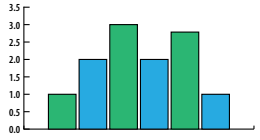
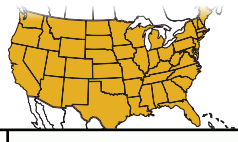
## Tips: Comparing Conflicting Information from Sources

When one or more sources contain conflicting information, weigh the following considerations to decide which source to use.

1. **Who is the author?**
   - Is the author an expert, or does he/she provide credentials? Is it a government agency, or reputable organization (.gov or .edu)? Is it a source that is published with expert reviewe If so, this may mean the information is more reliable.
   - If it is hard to identify who the author is, this source may not be as reliable.
   - Does the author seem to be unbiased? Is the author using facts to back up statements, positions, or opinions? Biased writing is less credible.
2. **What is the date of publication?**
   - Find the publication date of the book, magazine, or online article, or the date of the last update of a web page. Both print and digital information can become outdated.
   - If a date cannot be located for an online resource, it may be a less reliable source.
   - Sources that are substantially more recent might include new information or discoveries

## Graphics in Informative/ Explanatory Writing

Review the types of graphics. For each type, write a few ways the graphics may be used in writing informative/explanatory text.

| Graphics | How to Use Graphics in Writing |
|---|---|
| **Charts, Tables, or Graphs** These graphics are good for showing and comparing numbers and percentages.   | |
| **Maps** Maps are useful for showing locations mentioned in text.  | |

### Form logical, well-reasoned arguments

- Claims
- Reasons
- Evidence
- Opposing claims

### Collaborate with others

- Tasks
- Roles
- Schedules
- Discussions
- Presentations
- Constructive feedback

### Use technology strategically

- Locate information
- Evaluate sources
- Text features
- Graphics
- Multimedia
- Publishing

# What Can *Step Up to Writing* Students Achieve?

## Significant Growth in Skill and Confidence

### Confidence in their writing ability

Students come to school with a wide range of writing abilities. Whether students write at the below basic, basic, proficient, or advanced levels, *Step Up to Writing*'s step-by-step approach gives all students the means to write well-organized and engaging texts.

### Expanded awareness of techniques for reading deeply

Reading well and responding to text in writing takes practice. *Step Up to Writing* students learn hands-on techniques for marking text, taking notes, summarizing, and making inferences and analyzing text.

### Skillful use of the English language

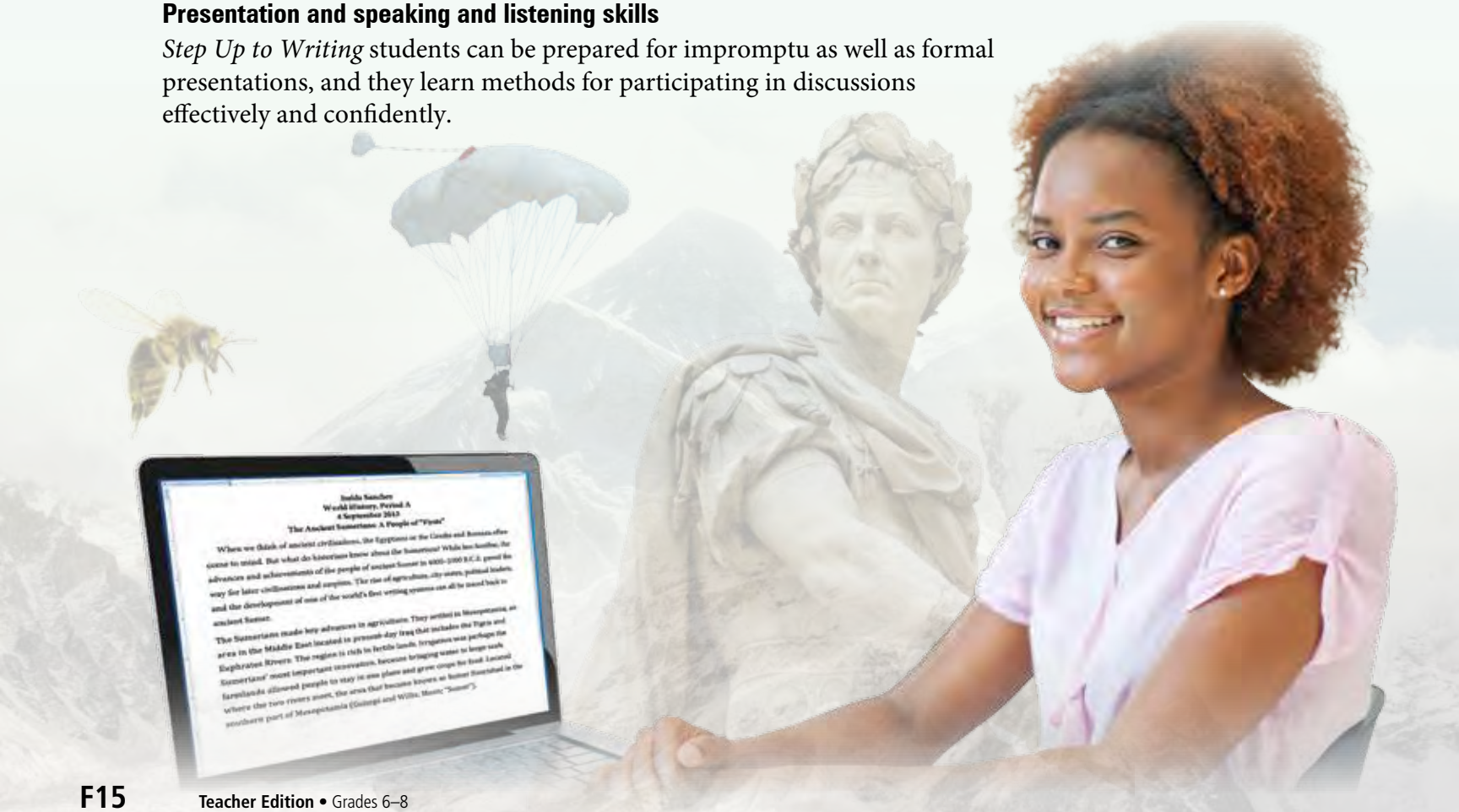
Expressive and fluent use of language grows as students learn how to apply the conventions of standard English and develop the craft and style of using word choice and syntax to customize their writing to different audiences for different purposes.

### Engagement and collaboration with peers

Partner and group work are an integral part of *Step Up to Writing* instruction. Peer review is emphasized as an important step in the writing process. Additional strategies teach students how to collaborate on group projects.

### Presentation and speaking and listening skills

*Step Up to Writing* students can be prepared for impromptu as well as formal presentations, and they learn methods for participating in discussions effectively and confidently.

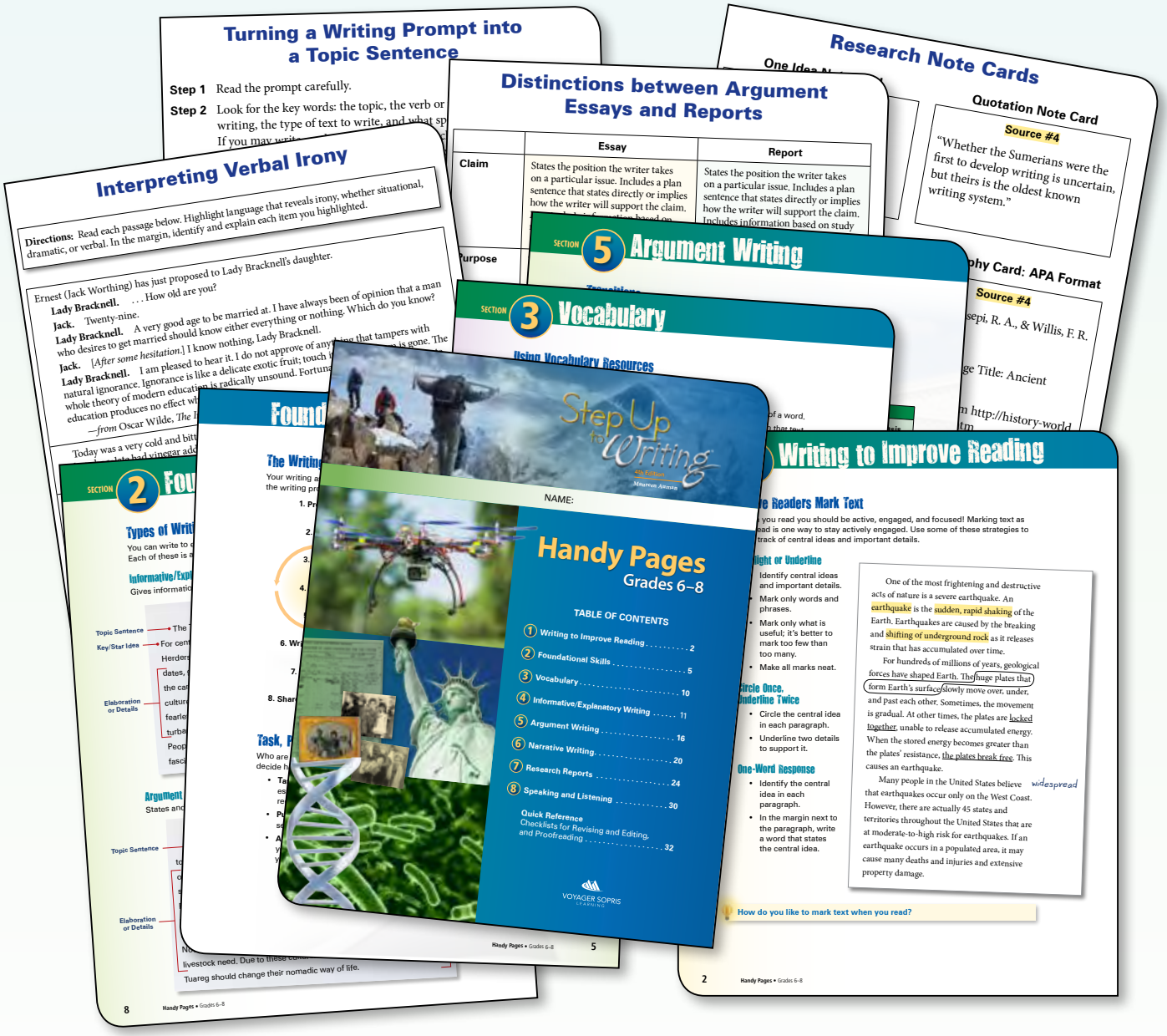


## Strategic use of technology for research and publishing

*Step Up to Writing* gives students tools for developing keyboarding ability, assessing online resources for research, and incorporating multimedia into writing and presentations.

## Preparation for assessment writing

Assessments are a fact of academic life. Students can be prepared to take assessments by learning how to evaluate prompts and create time budgets as well as learning strategies for knowing how to approach computer-based assessments.



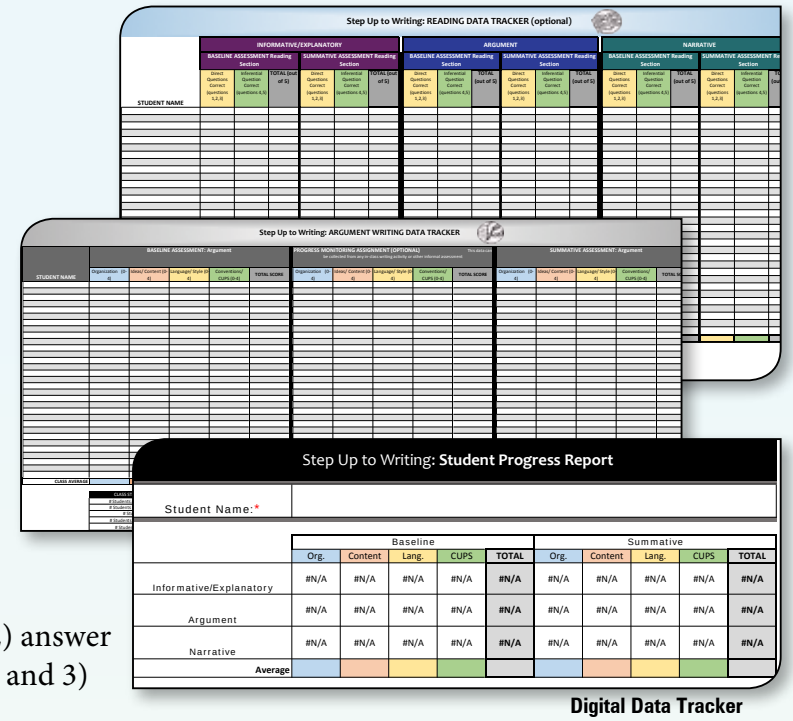

**Handy Pages and Tools**

# How Does *Step Up to Writing* Support Teachers?

## Assessments to Track Student Growth

Assessment provides the data needed to make informed instructional decisions in order to meet student needs. The *Step Up to Writing* assessment plan provides rigorous baseline and summative assessments for each grade level and for each type of writing (informative/explanatory, argument, and narrative).

The baseline and summative assessments are designed as performance task assessments similar to new standardized assessments aligned with the CCSS ELA. The assessments have students: 1) read selections of authentic text on the same topic from different sources, 2) answer five multiple-choice comprehension questions, and 3) write a short essay based on a prompt.




**Digital Data Tracker**

The writing portion of the assessments are graded using the *Step Up to Writing* Scoring Guides, which are aligned to the CCSS ELA for grades 6–8. These Scoring Guides employ student-friendly language so that students can also use them in the assessment of their own work.

A Digital Data Tracker is provided to make it easy to monitor student growth. The Digital Data Tracker, assessments, and Scoring Guides are available at **www.stepuptowriting.com**.

## Flexible Implementation

The *Step Up to Writing Assessment and Implementation Guide* describes how to implement a sequence of instruction to meet all of the CCSS ELA for writing, speaking and listening, and language, as well as many of the standards for reading informational text and reading literature. Differentiation suggestions are also provided.

For more information about the assessments and implementation plans, see the *Step Up to Writing Assessment and Implementation Guide*.

However, there are many other ways to implement *Step Up to Writing*. Teachers can also select strategies from any listed in the Teacher Edition table of contents (pages F1–F7) or by referring to the chart of core strategies in each section introduction.

When selecting strategies, it is recommended to begin instruction of *Step Up to Writing* with Sections 1, 2, and 3 if students need to gain familiarity with program terminology and processes, or if they need more foundational skills. Then students are ready to learn the three types of writing. In middle school, it is important to focus on informative/explanatory and argument writing, as these have been identified as important for college and career readiness (CCSS; The National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011).

## A Plan for Teachers

The *Step Up to Writing* program is filled with strategies, assessment materials, and data tracking tools to help teachers provide instruction to meet the needs of students. The *Step Up to Writing Assessment and Implementation Guide* provides an assessment and implementation plan that teachers can use to ensure they are helping students achieve the rigorous goals set by the CCSS ELA.

### Assessing Beginning Skill Levels with Baseline Assessments

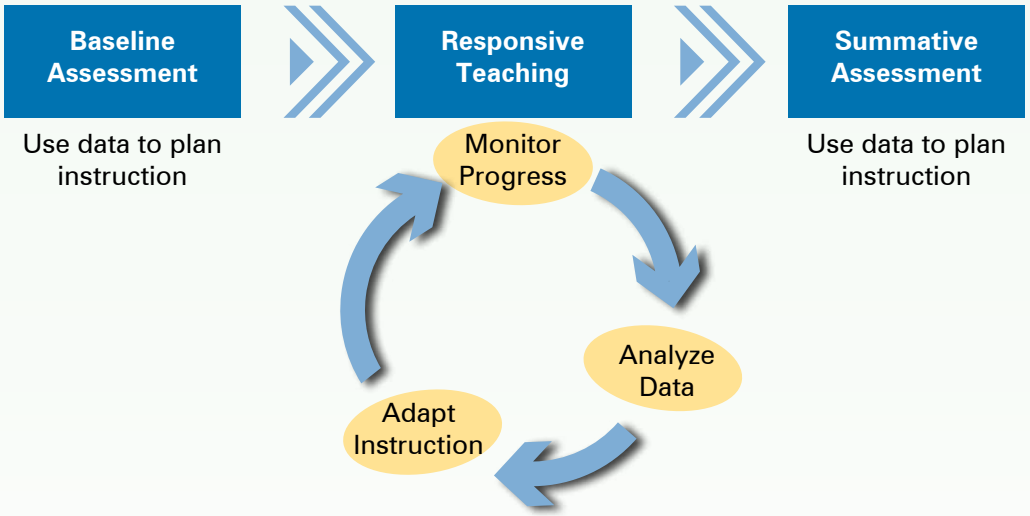
- Use the *Step Up to Writing Assessment and Implementation Guide* for instructions on how to administer the baseline assessments and use the data to plan instruction appropriate to students' needs and abilities.

### Responsive Teaching

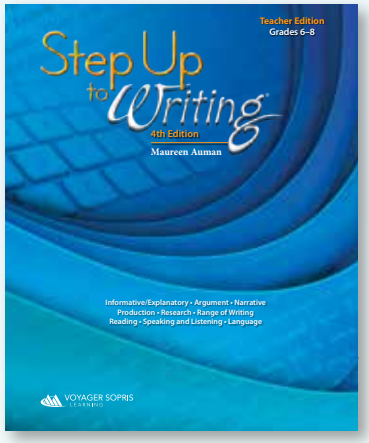
- Monitor students' progress using the data tracking and progress monitoring tools described in the guide to pinpoint areas of strength and concern and adapt instruction.
- See the guide for suggestions on selecting appropriate strategies and making use of the Differentiation suggestions that appear throughout the program.

### Assessing Skill Mastery with Summative Assessments

- Use the *Step Up to Writing Assessment and Implementation Guide* for instructions on how to administer the summative assessments and use the data to plan ongoing instruction.



## *Step Up to Writing* Classroom Materials




Teacher Edition

### *Step Up to Writing* Teacher Edition

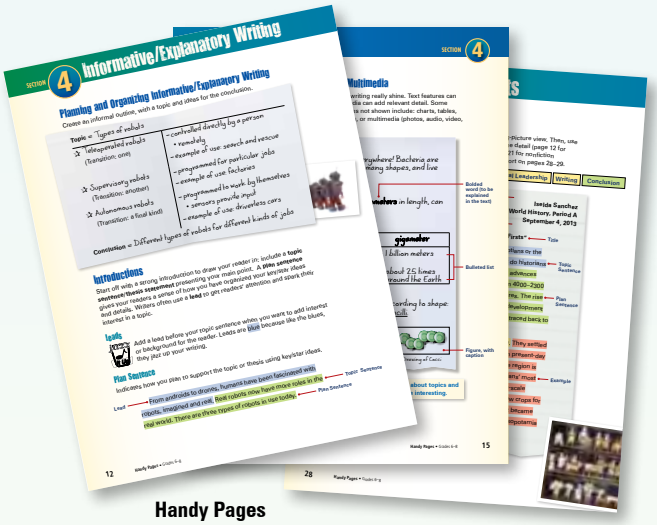
- Strategies
  - Objectives
  - Step-by-step instruction
  - Differentiation
  - Craft and Style tips
- Alignment to CCSS ELA

HP Reminds teachers when to refer students to Handy Pages.

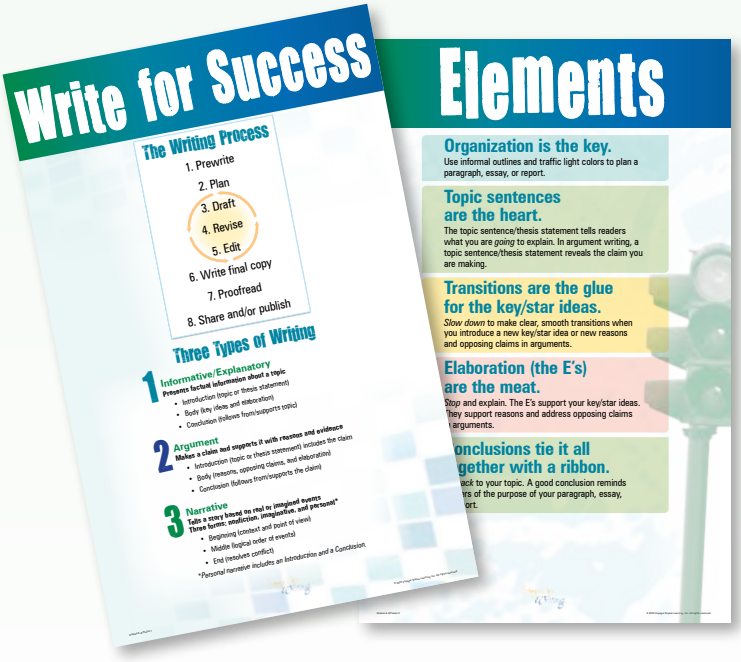
Indicates strategies that have professional development videos that can be viewed before teaching them.

### Handy Pages

- Student-friendly, consumable reference
- Useful reference for teachers to reinforce instruction
- Support for writing in all content areas
- Support for the writing process and the three text types
- Also supports content-area writing, reading comprehension, and research and presentation skills



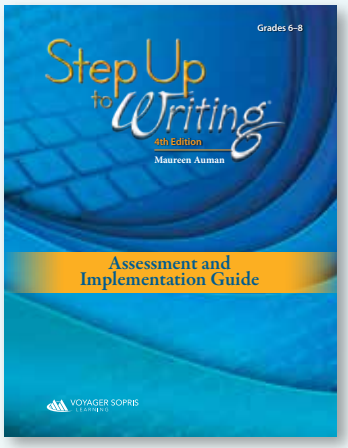

Handy Pages




Posters

### Posters

- Colorful, informative classroom posters
- Quick references to support writing skills




**Assessment and Implementation Guide**

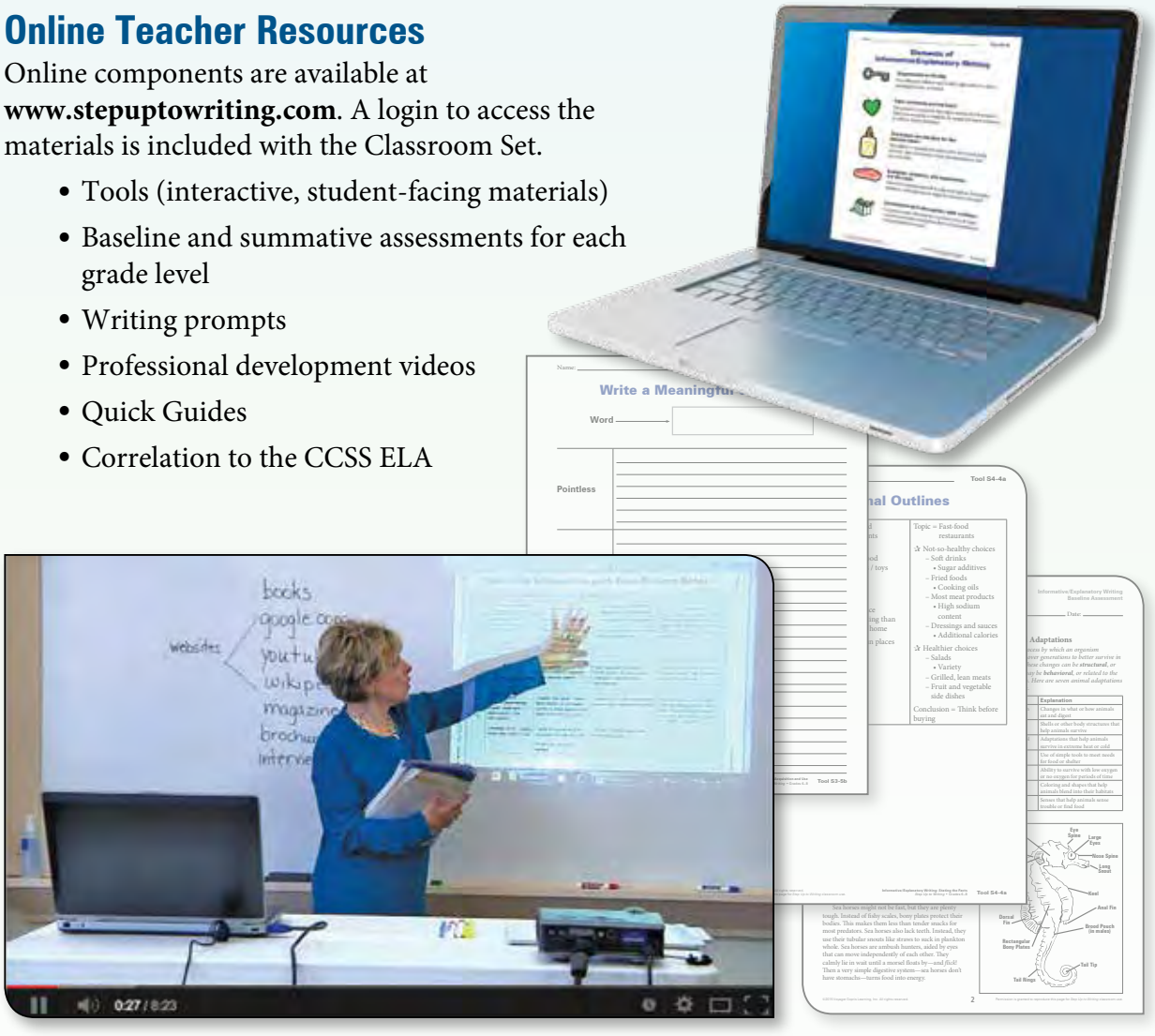
## *Step Up to Writing Assessment and Implementation Guide*

- Baseline and summative assessments
- Progress-monitoring suggestions
- Implementation plans and differentiation
- Assessments, Scoring Guides, and Digital Data Tracker available online at **www.stepuptowriting.com**

## Online Teacher Resources

Online components are available at **www.stepuptowriting.com**. A login to access the materials is included with the Classroom Set.

- Tools (interactive, student-facing materials)
- Baseline and summative assessments for each grade level
- Writing prompts
- Professional development videos
- Quick Guides
- Correlation to the CCSS ELA




**Professional Development Videos**

# A Guide for Using *Step Up to Writing* in the Classroom

## *Step Up to Writing* Strategies

After completing the appropriate grade-level baseline assessment and initial planning, use the strategies in the *Step Up to Writing* Teacher Edition to instruct students. To select strategies, see the *Step Up to Writing Assessment and Implementation Guide* for implementation plans, and choose a sequence of strategies appropriate to students' needs and abilities.

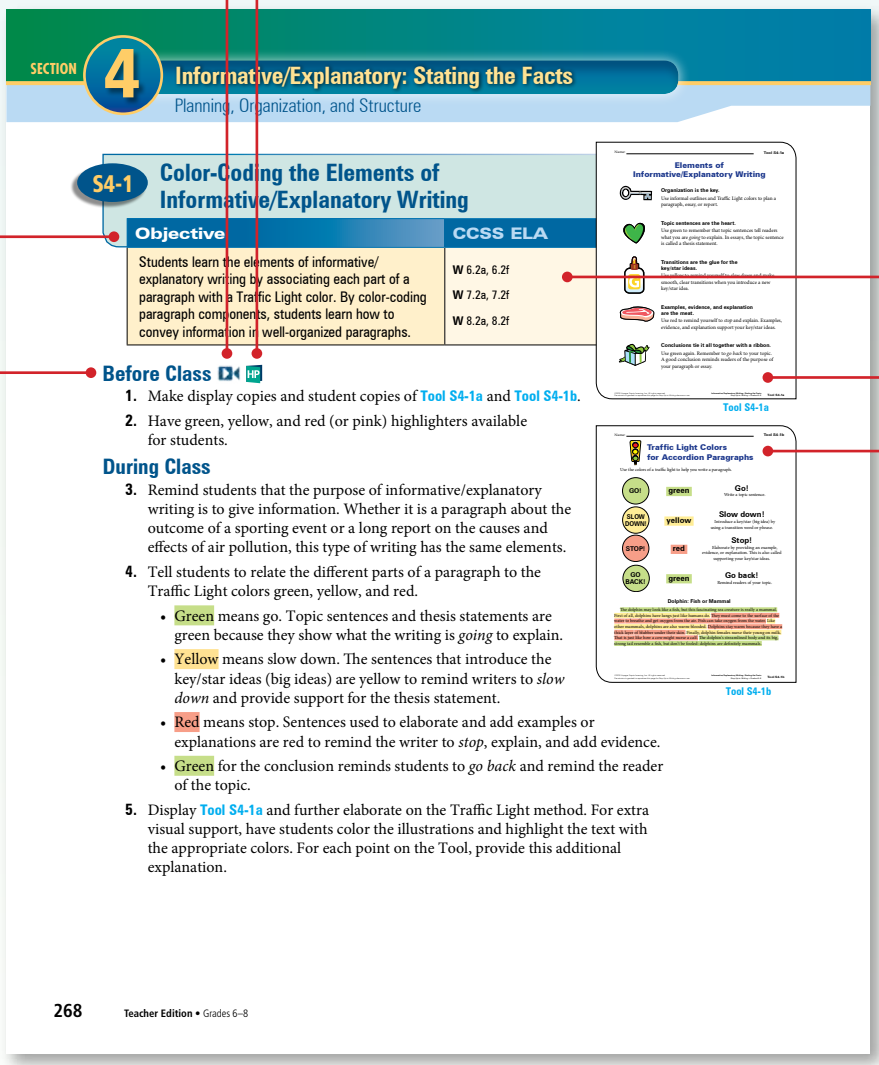
Strategies with a **video icon** have professional development videos showing how to teach the strategy.

The **Handy Pages icon** indicates whether the strategy has an accompanying Handy Page. Encourage students to review the associated Handy Page as you teach them the strategy.

The strategy **Objective** states the expected student outcomes.

The **Before Class** instruction indicates which Tools are required for the strategy, as well as any other materials or necessary preparation.

Each strategy lists which of the **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts** (CCSS ELA) it supports.



SECTION 4 Informative/Explanatory: Stating the Facts

Planning, Organization, and Structure

S4-1 Color-Coding the Elements of Informative/Explanatory Writing

| Objective | CCSS ELA |
|---|---|
| Students learn the elements of informative/explanatory writing by associating each part of a paragraph with a Traffic Light color. By color-coding paragraph components, students learn how to convey information in well-organized paragraphs. | W 6.2a, 6.2f<br>W 7.2a, 7.2f<br>W 8.2a, 8.2f |

**Before Class**

1. Make display copies and student copies of Tool S4-1a and Tool S4-1b.
2. Have green, yellow, and red (or pink) highlighters available for students.

**During Class**

3. Remind students that the purpose of informative/explanatory writing is to give information. Whether it is a paragraph about the outcome of a sporting event or a long report on the causes and effects of air pollution, this type of writing has the same elements.
4. Tell students to relate the different parts of a paragraph to the Traffic Light colors green, yellow, and red.
   - Green means go. Topic sentences and thesis statements are green because they show what the writing is *going* to explain.
   - Yellow means slow down. The sentences that introduce the key/star ideas (big ideas) are yellow to remind writers to *slow down* and provide support for the thesis statement.
   - Red means stop. Sentences used to elaborate and add examples or explanations are red to remind the writer to *stop*, explain, and add evidence.
   - Green for the conclusion reminds students to *go back* and remind the reader of the topic.
5. Display Tool S4-1a and further elaborate on the Traffic Light method. For extra visual support, have students color the illustrations and highlight the text with the appropriate colors. For each point on the Tool, provide this additional explanation.

Elements of Informative/Explanatory Writing

Tool S4-1a

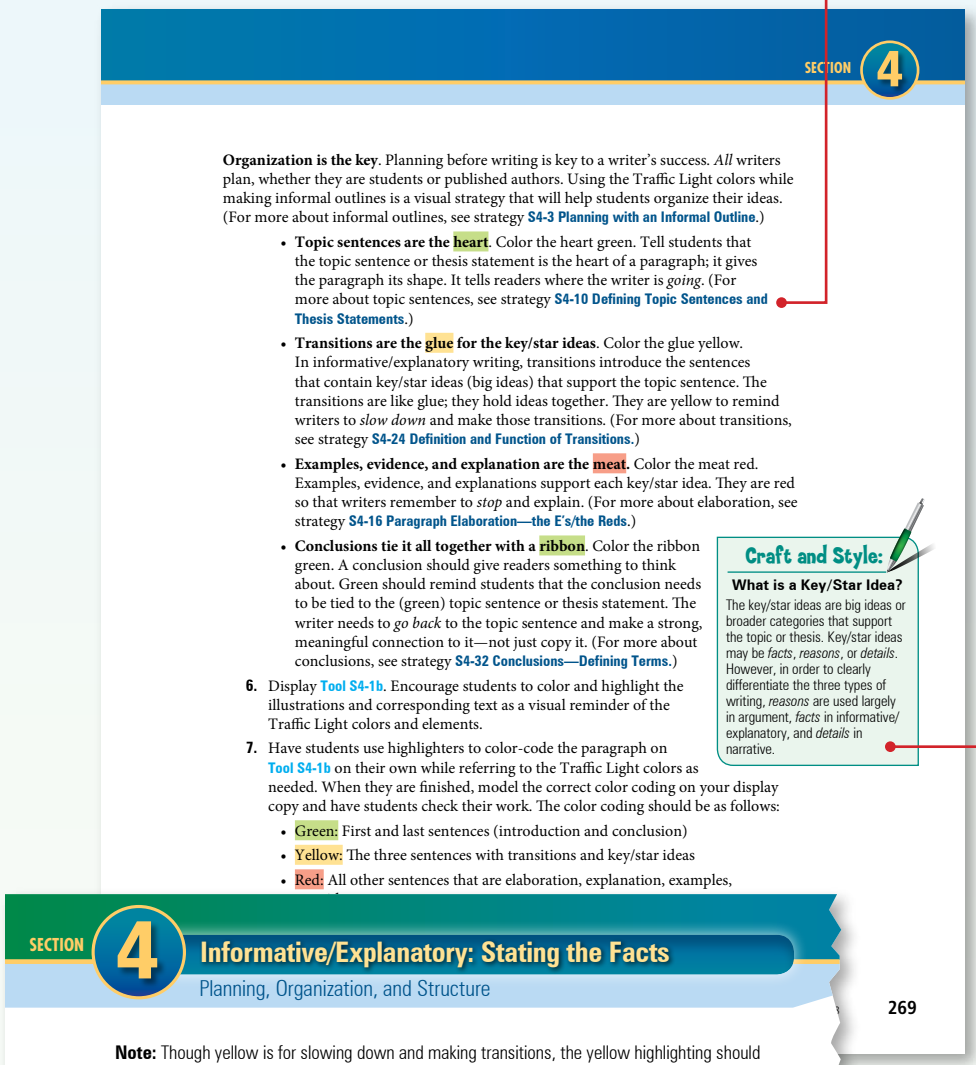
Traffic Light Colors for Accordion Paragraphs

Tool S4-1b

268 Teacher Edition • Grades 6–8

Each **Tool** necessary for teaching the strategy appears as a thumbnail image. Color coding is also shown on the tools in the *Step Up to Writing* Teacher Edition for easy visual reference.

The **During Class** instruction explains how to model and guide instruction and release students to independence. Dark blue strategy references indicate where to find more information about particular topics.



SECTION 4

**Organization is the key**. Planning before writing is key to a writer's success. *All* writers plan, whether they are students or published authors. Using the Traffic Light colors while making informal outlines is a visual strategy that will help students organize their ideas. (For more about informal outlines, see strategy **S4-3 Planning with an Informal Outline**.)

- **Topic sentences are the heart**. Color the heart green. Tell students that the topic sentence or thesis statement is the heart of a paragraph; it gives the paragraph its shape. It tells readers where the writer is *going*. (For more about topic sentences, see strategy **S4-10 Defining Topic Sentences and Thesis Statements**.)
- **Transitions are the glue for the key/star ideas**. Color the glue yellow. In informative/explanatory writing, transitions introduce the sentences that contain key/star ideas (big ideas) that support the topic sentence. The transitions are like glue; they hold ideas together. They are yellow to remind writers to *slow down* and make those transitions. (For more about transitions, see strategy **S4-24 Definition and Function of Transitions**.)
- **Examples, evidence, and explanation are the meat.** Color the meat red. Examples, evidence, and explanations support each key/star idea. They are red so that writers remember to *stop* and explain. (For more about elaboration, see strategy **S4-16 Paragraph Elaboration—the E's/the Reds**.)
- **Conclusions tie it all together with a ribbon**. Color the ribbon green. A conclusion should give readers something to think about. Green should remind students that the conclusion needs to be tied to the (green) topic sentence or thesis statement. The writer needs to *go back* to the topic sentence and make a strong, meaningful connection to it—not just copy it. (For more about conclusions, see strategy **S4-32 Conclusions—Defining Terms**.)

6. Display Tool S4-1b. Encourage students to color and highlight the illustrations and corresponding text as a visual reminder of the Traffic Light colors and elements.
7. Have students use highlighters to color-code the paragraph on Tool S4-1b on their own while referring to the Traffic Light colors as needed. When they are finished, model the correct color coding on your display copy and have students check their work. The color coding should be as follows:
   - Green: First and last sentences (introduction and conclusion)
   - Yellow: The three sentences with transitions and key/star ideas
   - Red: All other sentences that are elaboration, explanation, examples,

**Craft and Style:**
**What is a Key/Star Idea?**
The key/star ideas are big ideas or broader categories that support the topic or thesis. Key/star ideas may be *facts*, *reasons*, or *details*. However, in order to clearly differentiate the three types of writing, *reasons* are used largely in argument, *facts* in informative/explanatory, and *details* in narrative.

**Craft and Style** boxes in Sections 4, 5, and 6 of the *Step Up to Writing* Teacher Edition provide tips and examples to help explain how students may apply craft and create a particular style appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience.

SECTION 4 **Informative/Explanatory: Stating the Facts**
Planning, Organization, and Structure

269

**Note:** Though yellow is for slowing down and making transitions, the yellow highlighting should appear on the entire sentence that contains the transition, even though the sentence may also contain some elaboration.

**Differentiation:** Color-Coding the Elements of Informative/Explanatory Paragraphs

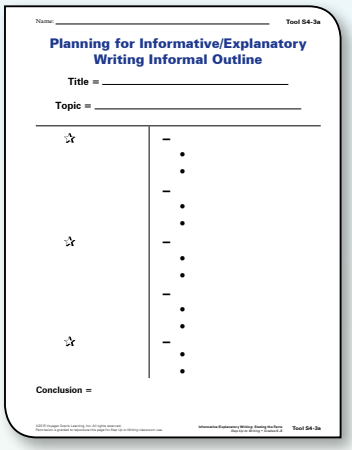
If students are having difficulty identifying the elements of informative/explanatory paragraphs, have them practice color-coding paragraphs they have written or example paragraphs from classroom materials, online sources, and magazines. In addition, remind students to put the strategy to work whenever they develop informal outlines (see strategy **S4-3 Planning with an Informal Outline**).

Each strategy includes point-of-use **Differentiation**. These offer suggestions on how to support struggling students or challenge those who excel.

## *Step Up to Writing* Tools

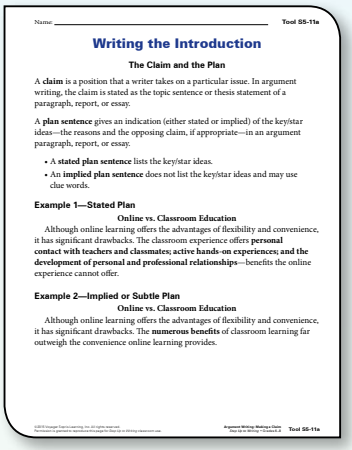
Use the *Step Up to Writing* Tools regularly, both as directed in the *Step Up to Writing* Teacher Edition and whenever helpful during writing assignments in any content area. Regular practice ensures students master writing skills and are ready for the next level of instruction. Tools take a variety of forms.

### Templates



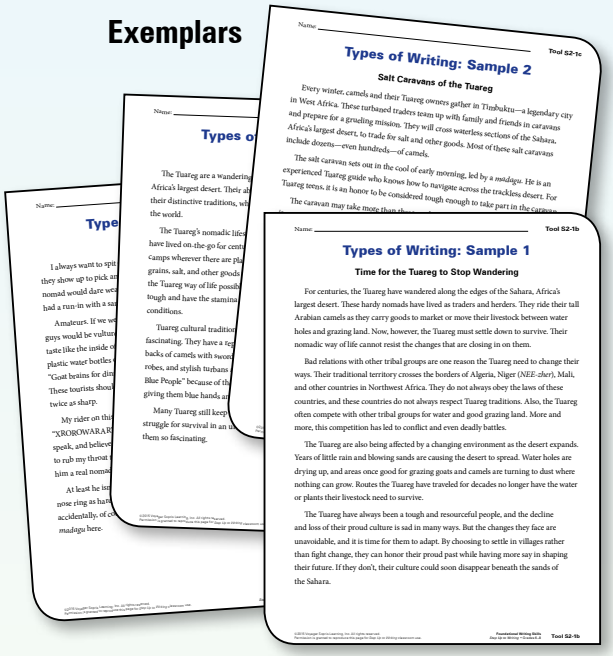

Tool S4-3a

### Step-by-Step Instructions




Tool S5-11a

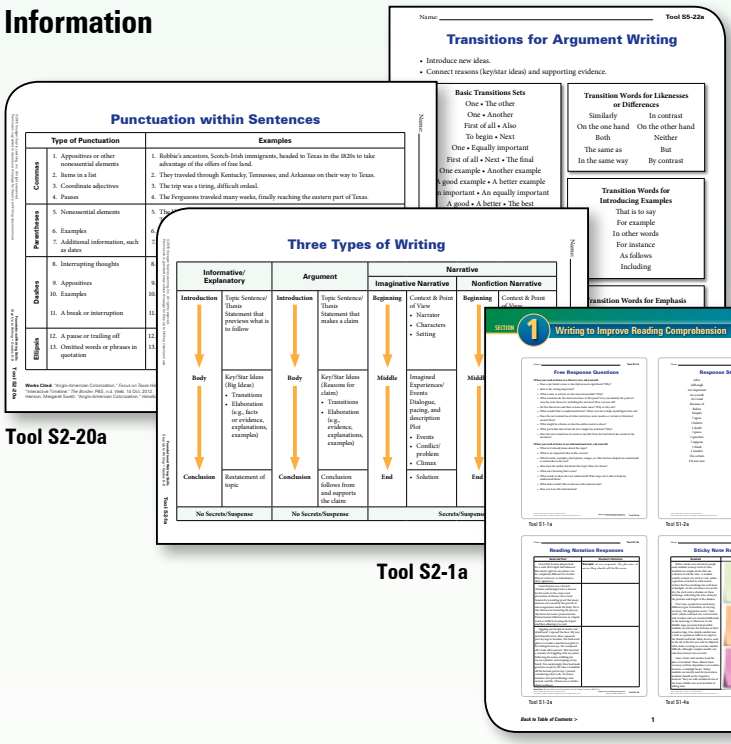
### Exemplars




Tools S2-1b–e

### Information

Tool S5-22a

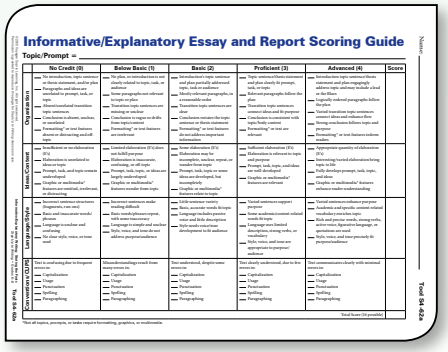



Tool S2-20a

Tool S2-1a

Snapshot of All Tools

### Scoring Guides and Checklists

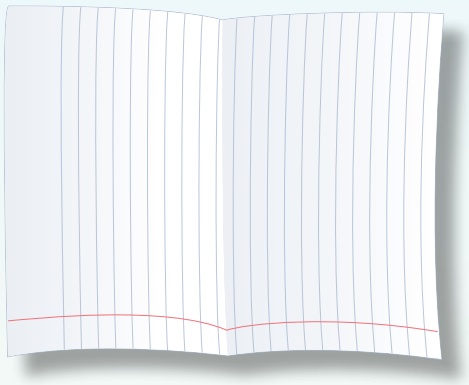



Tool S4-62a

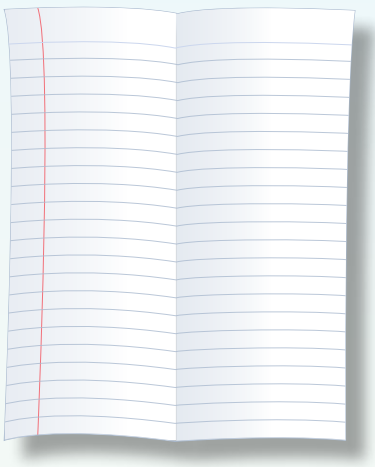
## Using Paper Folds

Many *Step Up to Writing* strategies are multisensory and direct teachers and students to use folded paper to help clarify a step or process. The folds divide paper into sections for organization and may be adapted to any type and size of paper. The following illustrations show examples of each type of fold.

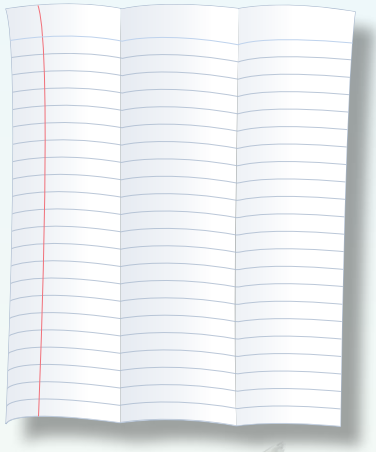
**Hamburger fold**



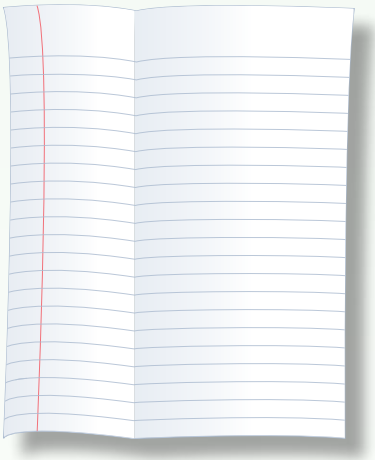
**Hot Dog Fold**



**Burrito Fold**



**Two-Column Fold**



**Accordion Fold**

## Setting High Standards

Using *Step Up to Writing* throughout the school will improve writing and test scores as well as comprehension in all content areas. Students become proficient writers more quickly because of concept reinforcement and additional skills practice. Schoolwide implementation helps teachers:

- Teach and reinforce writing and literacy skills in all content areas and grade levels by establishing a common language for talking about and teaching writing
- Establish common high standards for assessing writing and other academic skills

For suggested collaboration opportunities, see the implementation plans in the *Step Up to Writing Assessment and Implementation Guide*.

## Support for Content-Area Teachers

The CCSS ELA have emphasized the shared responsibility of teaching literacy, and, as a result, *Step Up to Writing* is providing content-area teachers increased support.

*Step Up to Writing* includes grade-level exemplar texts in content-area topics, including history/social studies, science, technical subjects, math, and response to literature.

### Content-Specific Text

*Step Up to Writing* encourages writing in the content areas by including exemplars on relevant topics. This supports both students and content-area teachers. Exemplar texts included in the sections devoted to the main three writing types—Sections 4, 5, and 6—address content-area topics according to this approximate breakdown:

- 30 percent–history/social studies
- 30 percent–science
- 30 percent–technical subjects, math, response to literature, and other

ELA teachers who want to focus on literary analysis skills may also refer to the Section 1 exemplar texts, which emphasize response to literature.

### Strategies to Support Content-Area Teachers

Section 10: Writing in the Content Areas offers Quick Guides, which list strategies that support writing in particular content areas. See Section 10, pages 775–785, for more information.

Teachers using *Step-up to Writing* find tremendous value in using a writing process that is designed with different learning styles in mind. The scaffolding embedded in each lesson ensures that students will not only put their thoughts in writing in an organized manner, but present it in a way that engages the reader.

Tonia Thompson
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Accountability
Binghamton City School District

## *Step Up to Writing* and Other Literacy Initiatives

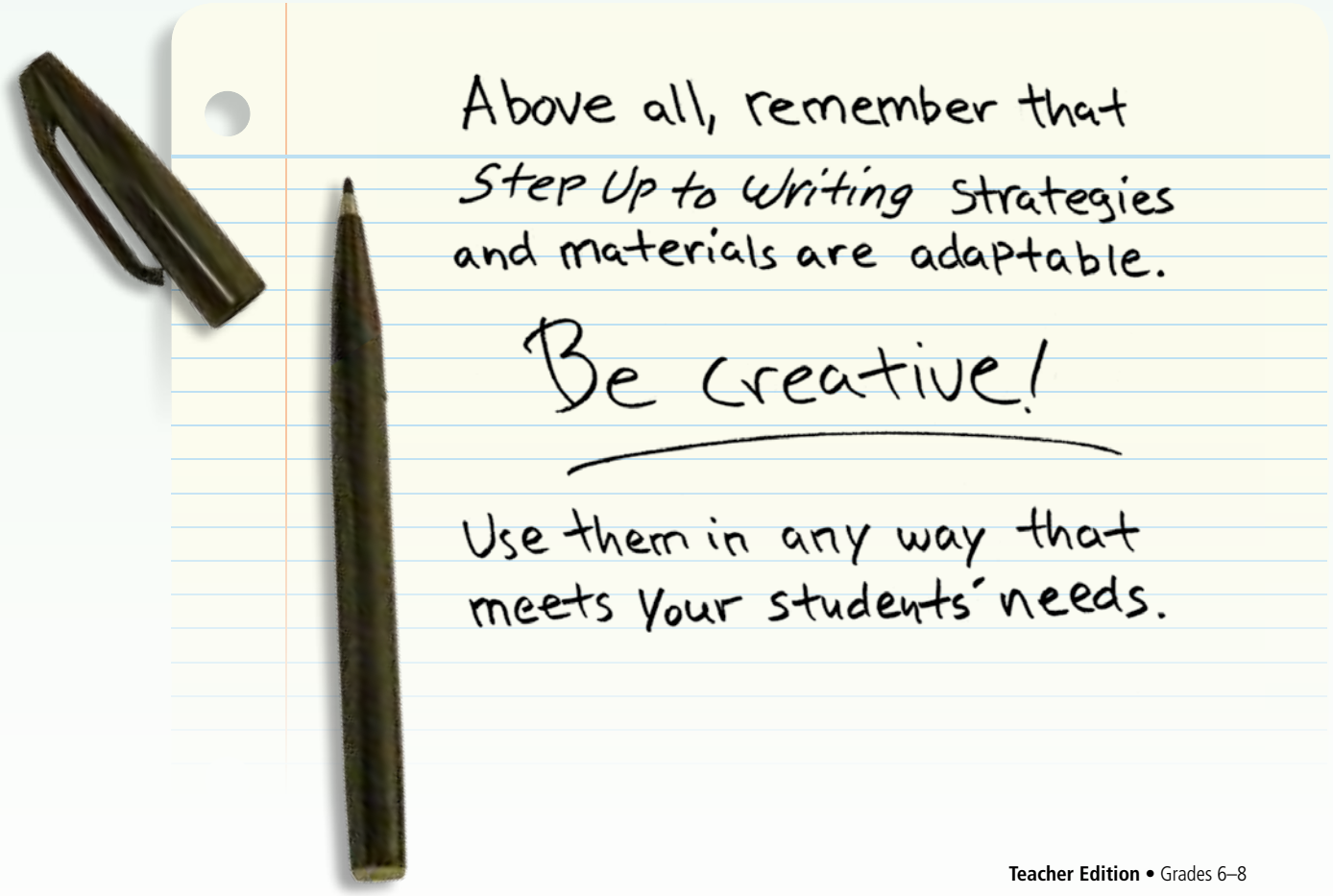
*Step Up to Writing* complements core literacy programs and other writing curricula, such as 6+1 Trait® Writing or writer's workshop.

### *Step Up to Writing*: The "How To" Behind 6+1 Trait® Writing

*Step Up to Writing* grades 6–8 aligns with the 6+1 Trait® Writing model, preparing students for the 6+1 Trait® Writing assessments. *Step Up to Writing* strategies provide the detailed instructions, or "how to," that help students progress in the traits: idea development, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. It also helps students with the "plus one" presentation, whether print, digital, oral, or a combination.

### *Step Up to Writing*: The "What" Inside Writer's Workshop

*Step Up to Writing* grades 6–8 is organized around the writing process, in keeping with the structure of the writer's workshop. *Step Up to Writing* strategies provide the "what," or the direct instruction, as well as time of practice, for discrete skills within each step of the writing process. *Step Up to Writing* provides practice in the basic steps of the writing process in Section 2, and provides specialized practice by writing type in Sections 4, 5, and 6.



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SECTION 2

# INTRODUCTION
# Foundational Writing Skills

## The Importance of Foundational Writing Skills

Sentences serve as an important foundation for all types of writing—informative/explanatory, argument, and narrative. Only with well-crafted, logically organized sentences can students produce effective paragraphs.

In addition to sentence writing, there are other critical foundational elements of writing. Students need to learn how to approach writing by understanding the three types of writing and their distinguishing characteristics, the steps of the writing process, the vital roles that audience and purpose play in all writing, the use of standard English conventions, how to collaborate with others on a writing project, and how to publish using technology.

**Ongoing Practice in Foundational Skills**

*Step Up to Writing* students grow as writers when practice in foundational writing skills is incorporated into every writing assignment.

Strategies in Section 2 can be used with strategies in Sections 4, 5, and 6 to ensure that students follow the steps of the writing process and apply solid sentence and paragraph writing skills to every type of writing.

## Teaching Foundational Writing Skills

Practice in foundational writing skills can be incorporated into every writing assignment. However, students do not need to write a complete composition to practice or strengthen skills. Focusing on a single step or skill, such as brainstorming, creating sentence variety, elaborating in a paragraph, or making pronoun antecedents clear, gives students concentrated practice with skills that they can then more easily apply to longer writing assignments.

When teaching foundational writing skills:

- Provide adequate models of all steps of the writing processes.
- Tell students what good writers do, and show students what good writing is.
- Model using technology and foster students' use of technology to produce writing.
- Use standard terms for parts of speech, and require students to use them.

## Differentiation

See the **Differentiation** box in each strategy for suggestions on modifying instruction to support students with diverse needs, readiness levels, and/or learning styles.

## Progress Monitoring and Formal Assessment

- See the **Progress Monitoring** subsection for Section 2 (page 197), for strategies and Tools that support neat paper rules and writing effective sentences.
- See the *Step Up to Writing Assessment and Implementation Guide* for materials to conduct baseline and summative assessments to help evaluate student proficiency with informative/explanatory, argument, and narrative writing.

# Developing Effective Sentences

The following list provides a possible scaffolded sequence for teaching sentence mastery. Strategies should be selected and taught in an order that best serves students' needs and abilities.

| Scaffolded Strategy Sequence | Sentence Writing Focus |
|---|---|
| S2-12 Recognizing Fragments, Run-Ons, and Complete Sentences<br>S2-20 Using Punctuation within Sentences | Correct Sentences |
| S2-14 Kinds of Sentences | Kinds of Sentences |
| S2-16 Sentence Structures<br>S2-17 Sentence Variety<br>S2-35 Using Phrases and Clauses | Sentence Structures and Variety |
| S2-15 Better Sentences<br>S2-19 Choosing Precise and Concise Language<br>S2-34 Making Pronoun Antecedents Clear | Improving Sentences |

# Moving from Sentences to Paragraphs

The following list provides a possible scaffolded sequence for teaching paragraph writing.

| Scaffolded Strategy Sequence | Paragraph Writing Focus |
|---|---|
| S2-21 Planning Paragraphs with Informal Outlines | Planning |
| S2-22 Topic Sentences | Topic Sentences |
| S2-23 Accordion Paragraphs<br>S2-24 Perfect Three-Sentence Paragraphs | Building Paragraphs |
| S2-25 Using Transitions Effectively<br>S2-26 Writing Cohesive Paragraphs | Transitions and Cohesion |
| S2-27 Improving Paragraphs with the ABC Activity<br>S2-28 Learning About Elaboration | Improving Paragraphs |

## Meeting the Common Core State Standards

Every strategy in *Step Up to Writing* aligns with specific Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS ELA) in grades 6–8. The **CCSS ELA** box at the beginning of each strategy lists the reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language standards that the strategy supports. Strategies in Section 2 center on the following College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing and Language:

**CCSS ELA Key**

**RL** = Reading Literature
**RI** = Reading Informational Text
**W** = Writing
**S/L** = Speaking and Listening
**L** = Language

**Anchor Standards for Writing:**

**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.

**Anchor Standards for Language:**

**Conventions of Standard English**

**1** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

**2** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

**Knowledge of Language**

**3** Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

For alignment of the CCSS ELA to specific *Step Up to Writing* strategies, see **www.stepuptowriting.com**.

## Foundational Writing Skills in the Content Areas

Use Section 2 strategies to develop foundational writing skills that foster clear thinking and clear communication in the content areas. See **Section 10: Writing in the Content Areas** for suggestions on using foundational skills strategies in specific content areas.

SECTION 2

# CONTENTS
## Foundational Writing Skills

**Choose those strategies that best meet the needs of your students.**

### Introduction to Writing


**S2-1** Introducing Three Types of Writing. . . . . 88
**S2-2** Prompts for Three Types of Writing. . . . . 91
**S2-3** The Writing Process . . . . . 93
**S2-4** Prewriting: Brainstorming . . . . . 95
**S2-5** Considering Purpose and Audience . . . . . 98
**S2-6** Recognizing the Traits of Effective Writing . . . . . 100
**S2-7** Collaborative Writing . . . . . 103
**S2-8** Using Technology to Produce and Distribute Writing . . . . . 106
**S2-9** Reinforcing Keyboarding Skills . . . . . 109
**S2-10** Using Standard English. . . . . 111
**S2-11** Proofreading. . . . . 114


### Masterful Sentences


**S2-12** Recognizing Fragments, Run-Ons, and Complete Sentences. . . . . 118
**S2-13** Sentences Telling Who, What, Where, When, Action, and How. . . . . 120
**S2-14** Kinds of Sentences. . . . . 122
**S2-15** Better Sentences . . . . . 124
**S2-16** Sentence Structures . . . . . 126
**S2-17** Sentence Variety . . . . . 129
**S2-18** Writing Perfect Sentences . . . . . 132
**S2-19** Choosing Precise and Concise Language . . 134
**S2-20** Using Punctuation within Sentences . . . . . 137

### Perfect Paragraphs


**S2-21** Planning Paragraphs with Informal Outlines. . . . . 141
**S2-22** Topic Sentences . . . . . 143
**S2-23** Accordion Paragraphs. . . . . 145
**S2-24** Perfect Three-Sentence Paragraphs. . . . . 148
**S2-25** Using Transitions Effectively . . . . . 150
**S2-26** Writing Cohesive Paragraphs . . . . . 153
**S2-27** Improving Paragraphs with the ABC Activity. . . . . 155
**S2-28** Learning About Elaboration . . . . . 157
**S2-29** Analyzing a Paragraph . . . . . 160


### Conventions of Standard English


**S2-30** Recognizing Parts of Speech . . . . . 164
**S2-31** Learning Parts of a Sentence with Diagrams . . . . . 166
**S2-32** Using Pronouns Correctly . . . . . 170
**S2-33** Making Pronouns Agree. . . . . 172
**S2-34** Making Pronoun Antecedents Clear . . . . . 175
**S2-35** Using Phrases and Clauses . . . . . 177
**S2-36** Avoiding Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers. . . . . 179
**S2-37** Using Verbals . . . . . 181
**S2-38** Using Different Verb Moods . . . . . 185
**S2-39** Avoiding Shifts in Verb Mood and Voice . 188
**S2-40** Punctuating Quotations . . . . . 191
**S2-41** Using Spelling Strategies. . . . . 194

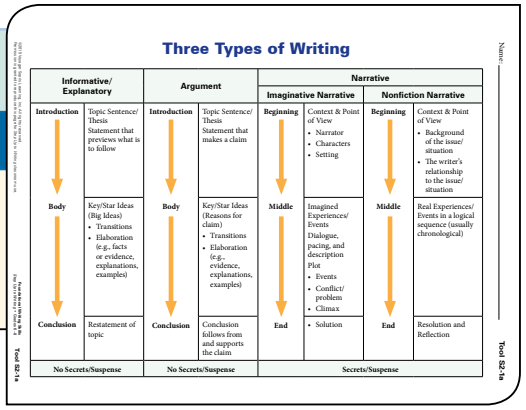

### Progress Monitoring


**S2-42** Neat Paper Rules . . . . . 198
**S2-43** Quick Check for Sentences and Topic Sentences . . . . . 200


For *Step Up to Writing* Teacher Resources see **www.stepuptowriting.com.**

# S2-1 Introducing Three Types of Writing

| Objective | CCSS ELA |
|---|---|
| Students learn to recognize the different patterns of organization and the common traits of three types of writing: informative/explanatory, argument, and narrative. | **W** 6.4; **S/L** 6.1; **L** 6.6<br>**W** 7.4; **S/L** 7.1; **L** 7.6<br>**W** 8.4; **S/L** 8.1; **L** 8.6 |


Three Types of Writing

| Informative/ Explanatory | | Argument | | Narrative | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Imaginative Narrative | | Nonfiction Narrative | |
| Introduction | Topic Sentence/ Thesis Statement that previews what is to follow | Introduction | Topic Sentence/ Thesis Statement that makes a claim | Beginning | Context & Point of View • Narrator • Characters • Setting | Beginning | Context & Point of View • Background of the issue/ situation • The writer's relationship to the issue/ situation |
| Body | Key/Star Ideas (Big Ideas) • Transitions • Elaboration (e.g., facts or evidence, explanations, examples) | Body | Key/Star Ideas (Reasons for claim) • Transitions • Elaboration (e.g., evidence, explanations, examples) | Middle | Imagined Experiences/ Events Dialogue, pacing, and description Plot • Events • Conflict/ problem • Climax | Middle | Real Experiences/ Events in a logical sequence (usually chronological) |
| Conclusion | Restatement of topic | Conclusion | Conclusion follows from and supports the claim | End | • Solution | End | Resolution and Reflection |
| No Secrets/Suspense | | No Secrets/Suspense | | Secrets/Suspense | | | |

Name: _____ Tool S2-1a

Tool S2-1a

## Before Class

1. Make a display copy and student copies of **Tool S2-1a**.
2. Make enough student copies of **Tool S2-1b**, **Tool S2-1c**, **Tool S2-1d**, and **Tool S2-1e** so that you can distribute one Tool to each of four groups. (In other words, all students in group 1 will have copies of **Tool S2-1b**. All students in group 2 will have copies of **Tool S2-1c**, and so on.)

## During Class

3. Display and distribute **Tool S2-1a**. Discuss the three types of writing, and talk about important associated terms and the different organizational patterns for each.
   - **Informative/Explanatory** writing presents factual information about a topic. It has an introduction with a topic sentence or thesis statement that previews what is to follow; a body that includes key/star ideas (big ideas) supported by elaboration (such as facts or evidence, explanations, or examples); and a conclusion that restates the topic.
   - **Argument** writing makes a claim and supports it with reasons. It has an introduction with a topic sentence or thesis statement that states a claim; a body that includes reasons supported by elaboration (such as evidence, explanations, and examples); and a conclusion that follows from and supports the claim.
   - **Narrative** writing tells a story based on imagined or real events. Narratives come in two forms, imaginative and nonfiction:
     - *Imaginative narrative* has a beginning that introduces the story's context and point of view (narrator, characters, and setting); a middle that extends the plot (events, conflict, climax); and an end that reveals the final element of the plot, the solution.

Name: _____ Tool S2-1b

**Types of Writing: Sample 1**

**Time for the Tuareg to Stop Wandering**

For centuries, the Tuareg have wandered along the edges of the Sahara, Africa's largest desert. These hardy nomads have lived as traders and herders. They ride their tall Arabian camels as they carry goods to market or move their livestock between water holes and grazing land. Now, however, the Tuareg must settle down to survive. Their nomadic way of life cannot resist the changes that are closing in on them.

Bad relations with other tribal groups are one reason the Tuareg need to change their ways. Their traditional territory crosses the borders of Algeria, Niger (*NEE-zher*), Mali, and other countries in Northwest Africa. They do not always obey the laws of these countries, and these countries do not always respect Tuareg traditions. Also, the Tuareg often compete with other tribal groups for water and good grazing land. More and more, this competition has led to conflict and even deadly battles.

The Tuareg are also being affected by a changing environment as the desert expands. Years of little rain and blowing sands are causing the desert to spread. Water holes are drying up, and areas once good for grazing goats and camels are turning to dust where nothing can grow. Routes the Tuareg have traveled for decades no longer have the water or plants their livestock need to survive.

The Tuareg have always been a tough and resourceful people, and the decline and loss of their proud culture is sad in many ways. But the changes they face are unavoidable, and it is time for them to adapt. By choosing to settle in villages rather than fight change, they can honor their proud past while having more say in shaping their future. If they don't, their culture could soon disappear beneath the sands of the Sahara.

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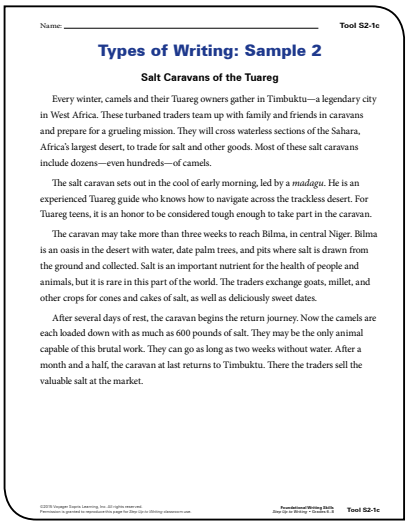
Tool S2-1b


Name: _____ Tool S2-1c

**Types of Writing: Sample 2**

**Salt Caravans of the Tuareg**

Every winter, camels and their Tuareg owners gather in Timbuktu—a legendary city in West Africa. These turbaned traders team up with family and friends in caravans and prepare for a grueling mission. They will cross waterless sections of the Sahara, Africa's largest desert, to trade for salt and other goods. Most of these salt caravans include dozens—even hundreds—of camels.

The salt caravan sets out in the cool of early morning, led by a *madagu*. He is an experienced Tuareg guide who knows how to navigate across the trackless desert. For Tuareg teens, it is an honor to be considered tough enough to take part in the caravan.

The caravan may take more than three weeks to reach Bilma, in central Niger. Bilma is an oasis in the desert with water, date palm trees, and pits where salt is drawn from the ground and collected. Salt is an important nutrient for the health of people and animals, but it is rare in this part of the world. The traders exchange goats, millet, and other crops for cones and cakes of salt, as well as deliciously sweet dates.

After several days of rest, the caravan begins the return journey. Now the camels are each loaded down with as much as 600 pounds of salt. They may be the only animal capable of this brutal work. They can go as long as two weeks without water. After a month and a half, the caravan at last returns to Timbuktu. There the traders sell the valuable salt at the market.

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Tool S2-1c

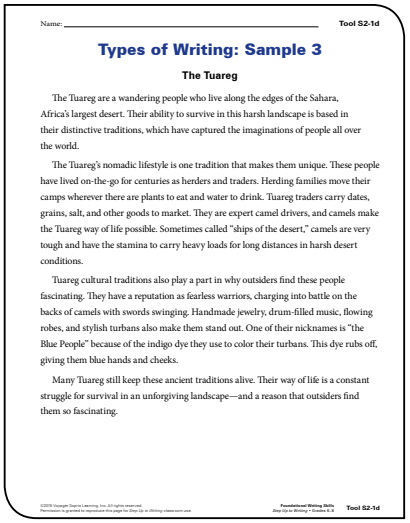
– *Nonfiction narrative* has a beginning that introduces the narrative's context and point of view (background on the issue, the writer's relationship to the issue); a middle that tells a series of events in a logical (usually chronological) order; and an end that resolves conflict and often includes reflection about the recounted events.

**Note:** There is a third form of narrative writing—personal narrative. This is also nonfiction narrative writing, but it has a different structure, which is explored in Section 6.

**4.** Have students reflect on their own reading and writing experiences to reinforce recognition of the various types of writing they read in school (or outside of school, if appropriate).

- Create a four-column chart with the column headings shown in the following table.
- Have students identify a particular assignment or reading material, tell which type of text was involved, and then (based on the criteria on **Tool S2-1a**) tell how they determined where on the chart the text belongs.

**Note:** Students may read argument writing more commonly in newspapers, online journals, or interest-area magazines (i.e., articles on the "best" phone, app, etc.).



Name: _____ Tool S2-1d

**Types of Writing: Sample 3**

**The Tuareg**

The Tuareg are a wandering people who live along the edges of the Sahara, Africa's largest desert. Their ability to survive in this harsh landscape is based in their distinctive traditions, which have captured the imaginations of people all over the world.

The Tuareg's nomadic lifestyle is one tradition that makes them unique. These people have lived on-the-go for centuries as herders and traders. Herding families move their camps wherever there are plants to eat and water to drink. Tuareg traders carry dates, grains, salt, and other goods to market. They are expert camel drivers, and camels make the Tuareg way of life possible. Sometimes called "ships of the desert," camels are very tough and have the stamina to carry heavy loads for long distances in harsh desert conditions.

Tuareg cultural traditions also play a part in why outsiders find these people fascinating. They have a reputation as fearless warriors, charging into battle on the backs of camels with swords swinging. Handmade jewelry, drum-filled music, flowing robes, and stylish turbans also make them stand out. One of their nicknames is "the Blue People" because of the indigo dye they use to color their turbans. This dye rubs off, giving them blue hands and cheeks.

Many Tuareg still keep these ancient traditions alive. Their way of life is a constant struggle for survival in an unforgiving landscape—and a reason that outsiders find them so fascinating.

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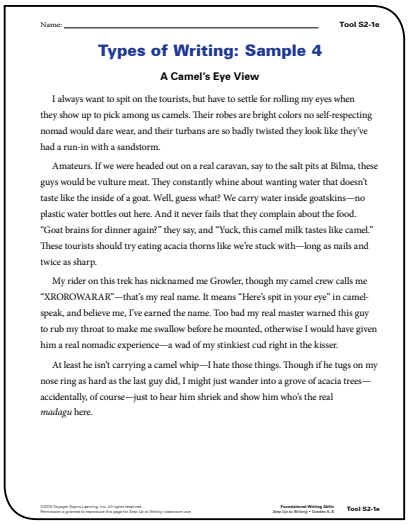
**Tool S2-1d**



Name: _____ Tool S2-1e

**Types of Writing: Sample 4**

**A Camel's Eye View**

I always want to spit on the tourists, but have to settle for rolling my eyes when they show up to pick among us camels. Their robes are bright colors no self-respecting nomad would dare wear, and their turbans are so badly twisted they look like they've had a run-in with a sandstorm.

Amateurs. If we were headed out on a real caravan, say to the salt pits at Bilma, these guys would be vulture meat. They constantly whine about wanting water that doesn't taste like the inside of a goat. Well, guess what? We carry water inside goatskins—no plastic water bottles out here. And it never fails that they complain about the food. "Goat brains for dinner again?" they say, and "Yuck, this camel milk tastes like camel." These tourists should try eating acacia thorns like we're stuck with—long as nails and twice as sharp.

My rider on this trek has nicknamed me Growler, though my camel crew calls me "XROROWARAR"—that's my real name. It means "Here's spit in your eye" in camel-speak, and believe me, I've earned the name. Too bad my real master warned this guy to rub my throat to make me swallow before he mounted, otherwise I would have given him a real nomadic experience—a wad of my stinkiest cud right in the kisser.

At least he isn't carrying a camel whip—I hate those things. Though if he tugs on my nose ring as hard as the last guy did, I might just wander into a grove of acacia trees—accidentally, of course—just to hear him shriek and show him who's the real *madagu* here.

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**Tool S2-1e**

- Complete the body of the chart you created with sub-types of each text type, or list specific student assignments or titles of texts students have encountered. Samples of both types of entries are shown on the following chart.

| Informative/Explanatory | Argument | Imaginative Narrative | Nonfiction Narrative |
|---|---|---|---|
| Compare/contrast<br>Analysis<br>Enumeration<br>Definition<br>Cause/effect<br>Problem/solution<br>Description<br>Explanation<br>How-to<br>Social studies, science, math, or other curricular textbooks | Persuasion<br>Critique<br>Sales/marketing<br>Editorials | Fiction/novels/short stories<br>Fantasy<br>Folk tale<br>Horror story<br>Legend<br>Mystery<br>Myth<br>Romance<br>Science fiction<br>Tall tale<br>Fairy tale<br>Historical fiction | Factual/true stories<br>Biography and autobiography<br>Feature story<br>Diaries/journals<br>Memoir |
| The Great Brain Book: An Inside Look at the Inside of Your Head by Harvey P. Newquist | Des Moines speech against U.S. involvement in WWII by Charles A. Lindbergh | Holes by Louis Sachar | Brothers in Arms: The Epic Story of the 761st Tank Battalion, WWII's Forgotten Heroes by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anthony Walton |

5. Arrange students in four groups and tell them they will analyze four different pieces of writing to determine what type of writing each is. Each group will get a chance to see each Tool; you may want to set a timer for each of the four rotations and specify a rotation procedure. Explain this procedure:
   - Ask each group to designate a student recorder who will use a separate piece of paper to note the title of the piece, name the type of writing the group decides it exemplifies, and jot some notes about the group's reasons for putting it in that category.
   - Direct students to read the text on their assigned Tool and determine which text type it is.
   - Group members should discuss the decision and all should agree on the reasons for the decision.
   - Tell students to keep their discussion and their decisions to themselves and not to write on the Tool.
6. Distribute copies of **Tool S2-1b** to one group, **Tool S2-1c** to the next group, **Tool S2-1d** to the third, and **Tool S2-1e** to the fourth group.
   - Direct students to follow the procedure you explained.

- When all groups are finished, have groups trade Tools. Proceed in the same manner as before, with members of the group reading, deciding on the type of writing, and recording the group's decision. Then have groups trade, and trade again, until everyone has evaluated all four Tools.

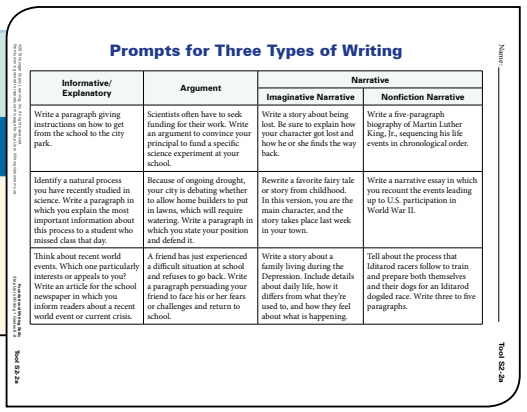
7. Call the class back together, and have a volunteer from each small group share their analysis of the text on one Tool. Seek class consensus on the categorization of each writing sample and the reasons that support that decision.

**Differentiation:** Introducing Three Types of Writing

For additional practice recognizing each text type, continue to ask students to identify types of writing as they encounter them in their reading for other classes and in your classroom. Ask them to support their opinions with reasons and examples.

# S2-2 Prompts for Three Types of Writing

| Objective | CCSS ELA |
|---|---|
| Students learn to recognize prompts for informative/explanatory writing, argument writing, and narrative writing and plan an appropriate response. | W 6.4<br>W 7.4<br>W 8.4 |



Prompts for Three Types of Writing

Name _____

| Informative/ Explanatory | Argument | Narrative | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Imaginative Narrative | Nonfiction Narrative |
| Write a paragraph giving instructions on how to get from the school to the city park. | Scientists often have to seek funding for their work. Write an argument to convince your principal to fund a specific science experiment at your school. | Write a story about being lost. Be sure to explain how your character got lost and how he or she finds the way back. | Write a five-paragraph biography of Martin Luther King, Jr., sequencing his life events in chronological order. |
| Identify a natural process you have recently studied in science. Write a paragraph in which you explain the most important information about this process to a student who missed class that day. | Because of ongoing drought, your city is debating whether to allow home builders to put in lawns, which will require watering. Write a paragraph in which you state your position and defend it. | Rewrite a favorite fairy tale or story from childhood. In this version, you are the main character, and the story takes place last week in your town. | Write a narrative essay in which you recount the events leading up to U.S. participation in World War II. |
| Think about recent world events. Which one particularly interests or appeals to you? Write an article for the school newspaper in which you inform readers about a recent world event or current crisis. | A friend has just experienced a difficult situation at school and refuses to go back. Write a paragraph persuading your friend to face his or her fears or challenges and return to school. | Write a story about a family living during the Depression. Include details about daily life, how it differs from what they're used to, and how they feel about what is happening. | Tell about the process that Iditarod racers follow to train and prepare both themselves and their dogs for an Iditarod dogsled race. Write three to five paragraphs. |

Tool S2-2a

Tool S2-2a

## Before Class

1. Make a display copy and student copies of **Tool S2-2a**.
2. Collect a number of writing prompts from students' current course materials, past standardized tests, past test prep materials, or *Step Up to Writing* prompts (at **www.stepuptowriting.com**).

## During Class

3. Display and distribute **Tool S2-2a**. If necessary, define the term *prompt* for the class. Explain that in writing, a prompt gives directions for an assignment or a test. A writing prompt may be a general idea, or it may tell writers exactly what they are expected to do.
4. Point out that the prompts on **Tool S2-2a** contain specific words (clues) to tell students what they should write. Students should look for the following:
   - Key words about the topic and other words that specify what to write about
   - Verbs that direct writing, such as *describe*, *explain*, *propose*, *defend*, or *tell*
   - Words that tell about the format, such as *paragraph*, *essay*, *narrative*, or *story*

5. Have students read each of the prompts on **Tool S2-2a** and practice marking words that describe how to approach the prompt. Tell them to mark prompts whenever marking the paper is permissible. When marking the prompt is not allowed, students can record the clue words they identified in their prewriting or planning notes.
   - Explain that when a prompt asks them to write a paragraph, report, or essay, they are likely being asked to use an informative/explanatory or argument format.
   - When a prompt asks for a story, a recounting of events, or a biography/memoir, they are likely being asked to use a narrative format.
   - Students may also notice the column headings above the prompts; however, ask them to focus on the clues that identify each prompt as fitting that writing type.
   - Have students circle the topic and the verb that directs the writing.
   - Have students underline words that show the type of writing and what specifically they are to write about.
   - Model analyzing and marking one or two of the prompts, or ask for student input. Analyze more prompts together if needed, and then release the students to analyze and mark the remaining prompts.
6. When students have finished analyzing the prompts, review the clue words. If students identify another word in one of the sample prompts, discuss how they might use that word to inform their work.
   - **Informative/Explanatory:** First row: *paragraph*, *instructions*; Second row: *paragraph*, *explain*, *information*, *process*; Third row: *article*, *inform*
   - **Argument:** First row: *argument*, *convince*; Second row: *paragraph*, *position*, *defend*; Third row: *paragraph*, *persuading*
   - **Imaginative Narrative:** First row: *story*, *character*, *explain*; Second row: *fairy tale*, *character, story*; Third row: *story*, *details*
   - **Nonfiction Narrative:** First row: *five-paragraph*, *biography*, *sequencing*, *chronological*; Second row: *narrative essay*, *recount*, *events*; Third row: *tell*, *process*, *three to five paragraphs*
7. Talk about which prompts on **Tool S2-2a** require an introduction, body, and conclusion (the informative/explanatory and argument prompts), and which prompts require a beginning, middle, and end (narrative prompts). (See also strategy **S2-1 Introducing Three Types of Writing**, or refer to **Tool S2-1a**, which identifies these structures.)
8. Present the additional prompts you selected from other sources to the class and have students evaluate them in the same way, noting key words and verbs and determining what the prompt is asking of the writer in terms of topic, details, format, and writing type.

9. Encourage students to analyze and locate the vital words in any writing prompt and to make sure they plan a response for the correct writing type, which determines structure (i.e., an introduction, body, and conclusion; or a beginning, middle, and end) as well as topic.

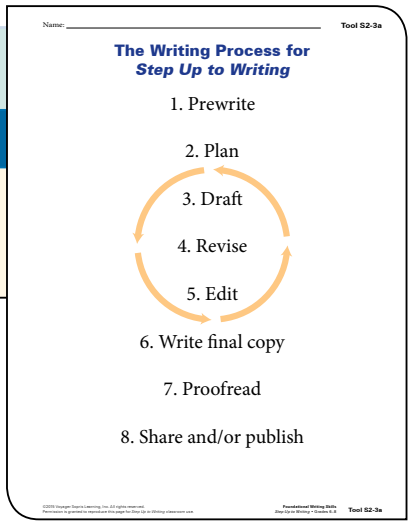
**Differentiation:** Prompts for Three Types of Writing

If students struggle with analyzing writing prompts, focus on converting a specific type of prompt into a topic sentence, as in strategy **S4-11 Turning a Writing Prompt into a Topic Sentence** (for informative/explanatory text) or strategy **S6-12 Turning a Writing Prompt into a Narrative**.

Or, try having students create writing prompts for articles, stories, or text encountered in class. Ask, "What would the prompt be that 'prompted' the writer to write this piece?" Then, challenge students to create their own writing prompts, possibly for a writing assignment in their area of interest.

# S2-3 The Writing Process

| Objective | CCSS ELA |
|---|---|
| Students develop a deeper understanding of each step in the writing process. | **W** 6.4; **S/L** 6.1; **L** 6.6<br>**W** 7.4; **S/L** 7.1; **L** 7.6<br>**W** 8.4; **S/L** 8.1; **L** 8.6 |


Name: _____ Tool S2-3a

**The Writing Process for *Step Up to Writing***

1. Prewrite
2. Plan
3. Draft
4. Revise
5. Edit
6. Write final copy
7. Proofread
8. Share and/or publish

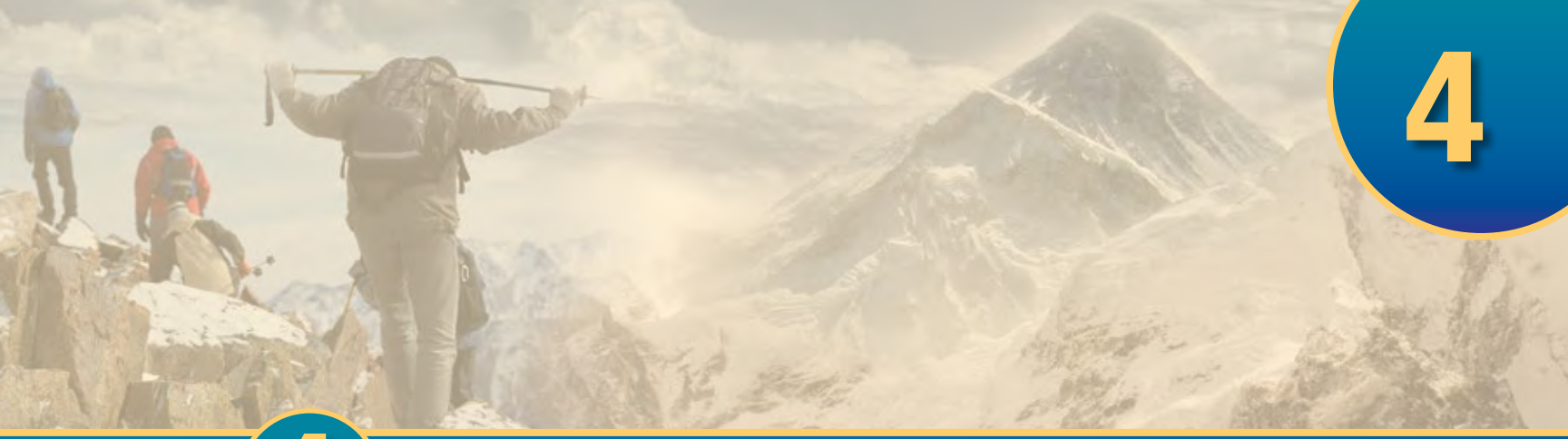
Tool S2-3a

## Before Class

1. Make display copies and student copies of Tool S2-3a, Tool S2-3b, and Tool S2-3c.

## During Class

2. Explain that the writing process includes specific, named steps that writers take as they move from general ideas to finished, well-written pieces. The steps can be used for all kinds of writing—long or short writing and informative, argument, and narrative writing.
3. Display and distribute Tool S2-3a. Read each of the steps aloud.
4. Point out the circular arrow in the middle of the Tool. Explain that writing is a process and that good writers often write, and rewrite, the same paragraph until they are satisfied with what they have written. Encourage students to review their writing and learn ways they can improve it rather than trying to finish as quickly as possible.



SECTION 4

# INTRODUCTION
# Informative/Explanatory Writing: Stating the Facts

## The Importance of Informative/ Explanatory Writing

Informative/explanatory writing conveys information and explains ideas. In effective writing of this type, a writer examines a subject and strives to increase readers' knowledge and understanding of that subject.

Informative/explanatory writing can have a variety of forms and genres, including familiar academic writing such as summaries, science or history reports, essays, and literature analyses; and technical or workplace writing such as lab reports, manuals, and instructions. It requires factual information including specific examples.

### Writing to Inform and Explain

*Step Up to Writing* students benefit from Section 4 strategies that focus on how to write successful and engaging informative/explanatory paragraphs, essays, and reports.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) recommends that by 8th grade, in order to attain college and career readiness, 70 percent of student writing should be for the purpose of explaining or persuading (National Assessment Governing Board, 2007).

## Teaching Informative/Explanatory Writing

Of the three main text types—informative/explanatory, argument, and narrative—informative/explanatory writing should be taught first and given significant emphasis. Both informative/explanatory and argument writing involve conveying information and supporting ideas with facts and details, but argument writing also aims to convince a reader to accept a claim as true. Successful informative/explanatory writing teaches the reader something new in a clear, interesting, and logical manner.

## Differentiation

See the **Differentiation** box in each strategy for suggestions on modifying instruction to support students with diverse needs, readiness levels, and/or learning styles.

## Craft and Style

Use the **Craft and Style** tips and examples to show student writers how they can apply craft and create a particular style that is appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience. With these tips, writers can express themselves in grammatically correct ways while achieving a unique style suitable for a specific writing genre or type of text.

**Craft and Style:**

**Point of View**

Use of the third-person point of view can create a more formal and objective style than the personal, more casual style of first person or the matter-of-fact, immediate style of second person.

First Person: *The local bicycling laws surprised me*.

Second Person: *You may be surprised by the local bicycling laws*.

Third Person: *The local bicycling laws surprised the community*.

## Progress Monitoring and Formal Assessment

- See the **Progress Monitoring** subsection for Section 4 (page 400), for strategies and Tools that guide the evaluation of informative/explanatory writing skills. Teachers should review this subsection as they plan instruction and assessment.
- See the *Step Up to Writing Assessment and Implementation Guide* for materials to conduct baseline and summative assessments to help evaluate student proficiency with informative/explanatory, argument, and narrative writing.

# Introducing Informative/Explanatory Writing

Begin informative/explanatory writing instruction with strategies that give an overview of the essential elements of informative/explanatory writing. The following strategies lay the groundwork for further instruction in writing informative/explanatory paragraphs, essays, and reports. See the ***Step Up to Writing Assessment and Implementation Guide*** for unit and lesson plans designed to meet the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS ELA) for writing, language, and speaking and listening for grades 6–8.

| *Step Up to Writing* Strategies | Informative/Explanatory Writing Focus |
|---|---|
| S4-1 Color-Coding the Elements of Informative/Explanatory Writing<br>S4-5 Accordion Paragraphs<br>S4-7 Elements of Accordion Essays and Reports | Elements of Informative/ Explanatory Writing |

# Moving from Paragraphs to Essays and Reports

Begin informative/explanatory writing instruction at the paragraph level. Also use strategies in **Section 2: Foundational Writing Skills** as needed to reinforce skills and concepts that underlie paragraphs (e.g., sentence writing, the writing process, and basic paragraph development). The following provides a possible scaffolded sequence for teaching the strategies in this section related to paragraph mastery. Strategies should be selected and taught in an order that best serves students' needs and abilities.

| Scaffolded Strategy Sequence | Paragraph Writing Focus |
|---|---|
| S4-3 Planning with an Informal Outline | Planning With Informal Outline |
| S4-10 Defining Topic Sentences and Thesis Statements | Topic Sentence |
| S4-24 Definition and Function of Transitions<br>S4-26 Transitions for Different Purposes | Transitions |
| S4-16 Paragraph Elaboration—The E's/the Reds<br>S4-17 Learning More About Elaboration | Elaboration |
| S4-32 Conclusions—Defining Terms<br>S4-33 Connecting a Conclusion to a Topic Sentence | Conclusion |
| S4-45 Editing Informative/Explanatory Text<br>S4-46 Peer Review and Revision | Editing and Revising |

Once students have gained the ability to write effective informative/explanatory paragraphs independently, provide instruction for writing essays and reports.

| Scaffolded Strategy Sequence | Essay/Report Writing Focus |
|---|---|
| S4-8 Writing Essays and Reports Step by Step<br>S4-9 Informal Outlines for Essays and Reports | Planning With Informal Outline |
| S4-12 Topic Sentence Variety | Topic Sentence/Thesis Statement |
| S4-28 Transitions in Essays and Reports<br>S4-29 Transition Topic Sentences | Transitions |
| S4-19 Increasing Elaboration in Essays and Reports<br>S4-20 Stretch, Don't Stack Practice | Elaboration |
| S4-45 Editing Informative/Explanatory Text<br>S4-46 Peer Review and Revision | Editing and Revising |

## Meeting the Common Core State Standards

Every strategy in *Step Up to Writing* aligns with specific Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS ELA) in grades 6–8. The **CCSS ELA** box at the beginning of each strategy lists the reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language standards that the strategy supports. Strategies in Section 4 center on the following College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing:

**CCSS ELA Key**

**RL** = Reading Literature
**RI** = Reading Informational Text
**W** = Writing
**S/L** = Speaking and Listening
**L** = Language

**Anchor Standards for Writing:**

**Text Types and Purposes**

**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.

**Production and Distribution of Writing**

**4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to the 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.

For alignment of the CCSS ELA to specific *Step Up to Writing* strategies, see **www.stepuptowriting.com**.

## Informative/Explanatory Writing in the Content Areas

Use Section 4 strategies to develop informative/explanatory writing skills that foster the clear thinking and clear communication necessary to demonstrate mastery of content-area curriculum. See **Section 10: Writing in the Content Areas** for suggestions on using writing strategies in specific content areas.

# CONTENTS

## Informative/Explanatory: Stating the Facts

SECTION 4

### Choose those strategies that best meet the needs of your students.


**Planning, Organization, and Structure**

S4-1 Color-Coding the Elements of Informative/Explanatory Writing . . . . . 268
S4-2 The Organization Game—Informative/Explanatory Writing . . . . . 270
S4-3 Planning with an Informal Outline . . . . . 272
S4-4 Informal Outlines of Various Lengths . . . . 274
S4-5 Accordion Paragraphs . . . . . 277
S4-6 Organization with Framed Paragraphs . . . 279
S4-7 Elements of Accordion Essays and Reports . . . . . 281
S4-8 Writing Essays and Reports Step by Step . . . . . 283
S4-9 Informal Outlines for Essays and Reports . . . . . 286

**Introductions**

S4-10 Defining Topic Sentences and Thesis Statements . . . . . 290
S4-11 Turning a Writing Prompt into a Topic Sentence . . . . . 292
S4-12 Topic Sentence Variety . . . . . 294
S4-13 Adding a Lead—The Blues—to a Paragraph . . . . . 299
S4-14 Creating Two-Sentence Introductions . . . . 301
S4-15 Leading with the Blues . . . . . 303

**Developing the Topic/Elaboration**

S4-16 Paragraph Elaboration—The E's/the Reds . . 307
S4-17 Learning More About Elaboration . . . . . 309
S4-18 Comparing Paragraph and Report Elaboration . . . . . 310
S4-19 Increasing Elaboration in Essays and Reports . . . . . 312
S4-20 Stretch, Don't Stack Practice . . . . . 314
S4-21 Using Vocabulary Meaningfully . . . . . 316
S4-22 Adding Quotations . . . . . 318
S4-23 Gathering Information from Sources: Informative/Explanatory Writing . . . . . 321

**Transitions**

S4-24 Definition and Function of Transitions . . . 324
S4-25 Transition Sets . . . . . 325
S4-26 Transitions for Different Purposes . . . . . 327
S4-27 Using a Variety of Transitions . . . . . 328
S4-28 Transitions in Essays and Reports . . . . . 330
S4-29 Transition Topic Sentences . . . . . 331
S4-30 Using Obvious and Subtle Transitions . . . . . 333
S4-31 Using Transition Topic Sentences in Longer Essays and Reports . . . . . 335

**Conclusions**

S4-32 Conclusions—Defining Terms . . . . . 337
S4-33 Connecting a Conclusion to a Topic Sentence . . . . . 339
S4-34 Not All Paragraphs Require a Formal Conclusion . . . . . 341
S4-35 Writing Successful Conclusions . . . . . 343
S4-36 Practicing and Improving Conclusions . . . 345

**Incorporating Graphics and Text Features**

S4-37 Text Features and Formatting . . . . . 347
S4-38 Graphics in Informative/Explanatory Writing . . . . . 349
S4-39 Multimedia in Informative/Explanatory Writing . . . . . 351

**Revising and Editing**

S4-40 Sentence Variety . . . . . 355
S4-41 Getting Caught in the *Things* Trap: Using Precise Words . . . . . 358
S4-42 Revising Verbs in Informative/Explanatory Text . . . . . 359
S4-43 Writing Meaningful and Precise Sentences . . . . . 361
S4-44 Using Domain-Specific Language . . . . . 362
S4-45 Editing Informative/Explanatory Text . . . . 364

SECTION 4

# CONTENTS *(continued)*

## Informative/Explanatory: Stating the Facts


**S4-46** Peer Review and Revision . . . . . 367

**S4-47** Analyzing a Paragraph . . . . . 368

**S4-48** Writing in First, Second, and Third Person . . . . . 370

**S4-49** Formal and Informal Style . . . . . 372


### Types of Informative/Explanatory Writing


**S4-50** Informative/Explanatory Text Structure: Definition . . . . . 376

**S4-51** Informative/Explanatory Text Structure: Classification . . . . . 378

**S4-52** Informative/Explanatory Text Structure: Compare/Contrast . . . . . 380

**S4-53** Informative/Explanatory Text Structure: Cause/Effect . . . . . 382

**S4-54** Informative/Explanatory Text Structure: Problem/Solution . . . . . 385

**S4-55** Forms of Informative/Explanatory Writing: Biographical/Autobiographical Sketches . . . . . 387

**S4-56** Forms of Informative/Explanatory Writing: Summary . . . . . 389

**S4-57** Forms of Informative/Explanatory Writing: Writing in Math . . . . . 392

**S4-58** Forms of Informative/Explanatory Writing: Science Reports . . . . . 394

**S4-59** Forms of Informative/Explanatory Writing: Technical Writing . . . . . 396

**S4-60** Forms of Informative/Explanatory Writing: Writing About Current Events . . . . . 398


### Progress Monitoring


**S4-61** Informative/Explanatory Paragraph Scoring Guide . . . . . 401

**S4-62** Informative/Explanatory Essay and Report Scoring Guide . . . . . 404


For *Step Up to Writing* Teacher Resources see **www.stepuptowriting.com.**

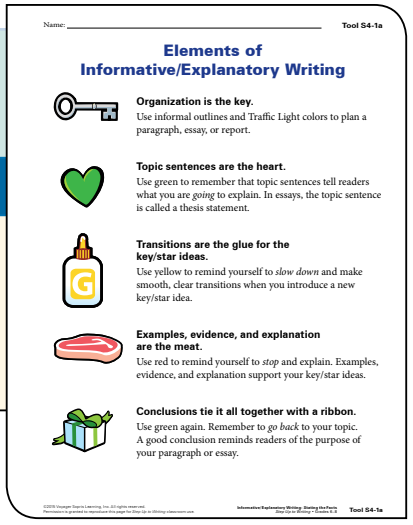
# Planning, Organization, and Structure

Properly planning and understanding the organization of informative/explanatory writing are key skills that writers need in order to present ideas and facts in a clear, logical manner. Proper organization aids the writer in presenting ideas and aids the reader in comprehension.

| Strategy | Strategy Description | Page | Tools |
|---|---|---|---|
| S4-1 Color-Coding the Elements of Informative/ Explanatory Writing | Introduce the five elements of informative/ explanatory writing and the Traffic Light colors | 268 | S4-1a and S4-1b |
| S4-2 The Organization Game—Informative/ Explanatory Writing | Categorize ideas by sorting words and phrases into broad topics, key/star ideas, and supporting details | 270 | S4-2a–S4-2c |
| S4-3 Planning with an Informal Outline | Visualize and plan the organization of informative/explanatory text | 272 | S4-3a and S4-3b |
| S4-4 Informal Outlines of Various Lengths | Learn how the length of an informative/ explanatory writing piece depends upon the number of key/star ideas and details for the topic | 274 | S4-4a, S4-4b, and S2-21a–S2-21c |
| S4-5 Accordion Paragraphs | Build informative/explanatory paragraphs with appropriate details and support | 277 | S4-5a, S2-23a, and S2-23b |
| S4-6 Organization with Framed Paragraphs | Use frames to build an informative/explanatory paragraph | 279 | S4-6a and S4-6b |
| S4-7 Elements of Accordion Essays and Reports | Learn the basics of essays and reports in order to plan, write, and evaluate work | 281 | S4-7a–S4-7c |
| S4-8 Writing Essays and Reports Step by Step | Acquire a manageable system for visualizing, organizing, and writing essays and reports | 283 | S4-8a and S4-8b |
| S4-9 Informal Outlines for Essays and Reports | Organize an informative/explanatory essay or report | 286 | S4-9a and S4-9b |

# S4-1 Color-Coding the Elements of Informative/Explanatory Writing

| Objective | CCSS ELA |
|---|---|
| Students learn the elements of informative/explanatory writing by associating each part of a paragraph with a Traffic Light color. By color-coding paragraph components, students learn how to convey information in well-organized paragraphs. | **W** 6.2a, 6.2f<br>**W** 7.2a, 7.2f<br>**W** 8.2a, 8.2f |


Name: _____ Tool S4-1a

**Elements of Informative/Explanatory Writing**

**Organization is the key.**
Use informal outlines and Traffic Light colors to plan a paragraph, essay, or report.

**Topic sentences are the heart.**
Use green to remember that topic sentences tell readers what you are *going* to explain. In essays, the topic sentence is called a thesis statement.

**Transitions are the glue for the key/star ideas.**
Use yellow to remind yourself to *slow down* and make smooth, clear transitions when you introduce a new key/star idea.

**Examples, evidence, and explanation are the meat.**
Use red to remind yourself to *stop* and explain. Examples, evidence, and explanation support your key/star ideas.

**Conclusions tie it all together with a ribbon.**
Use green again. Remember to *go back* to your topic. A good conclusion reminds readers of the purpose of your paragraph or essay.

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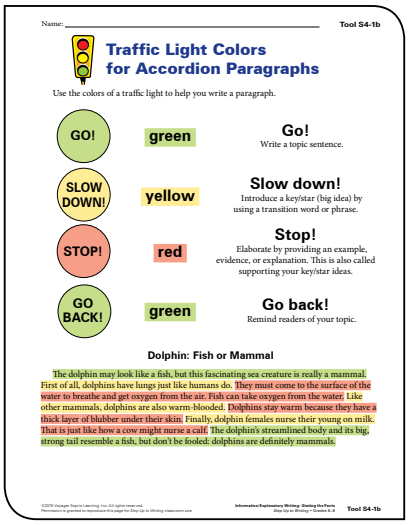
Informative/Explanatory Writing: Stating the Facts Tool S4-1a

Tool S4-1a


Name: _____ Tool S4-1b

**Traffic Light Colors for Accordion Paragraphs**

Use the colors of a traffic light to help you write a paragraph.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| GO! | green | **Go!** Write a topic sentence. |
| SLOW DOWN! | yellow | **Slow down!** Introduce a key/star (big idea) by using a transition word or phrase. |
| STOP! | red | **Stop!** Elaborate by providing an example, evidence, or explanation. This is also called supporting your key/star ideas. |
| GO BACK! | green | **Go back!** Remind readers of your topic. |

**Dolphin: Fish or Mammal**

The dolphin may look like a fish, but this fascinating sea creature is really a mammal. First of all, dolphins have lungs just like humans do. They must come to the surface of the water to breathe and get oxygen from the air. Fish can take oxygen from the water. Like other mammals, dolphins are also warm-blooded. Dolphins stay warm because they have a thick layer of blubber under their skin. Finally, dolphin females nurse their young on milk. That is just like how a cow might nurse a calf. The dolphin's streamlined body and its big, strong tail resemble a fish, but don't be fooled: dolphins are definitely mammals.

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Informative/Explanatory Writing: Stating the Facts Tool S4-1b

Tool S4-1b

## Before Class

1. Make display copies and student copies of Tool S4-1a and Tool S4-1b.
2. Have green, yellow, and red (or pink) highlighters available for students.

## During Class

3. Remind students that the purpose of informative/explanatory writing is to give information. Whether it is a paragraph about the outcome of a sporting event or a long report on the causes and effects of air pollution, this type of writing has the same elements.
4. Tell students to relate the different parts of a paragraph to the Traffic Light colors green, yellow, and red.
   - Green means go. Topic sentences and thesis statements are green because they show what the writing is *going* to explain.
   - Yellow means slow down. The sentences that introduce the key/star ideas (big ideas) are yellow to remind writers to *slow down* and provide support for the thesis statement.
   - Red means stop. Sentences used to elaborate and add examples or explanations are red to remind the writer to *stop*, explain, and add evidence.
   - Green for the conclusion reminds students to *go back* and remind the reader of the topic.
5. Display Tool S4-1a and further elaborate on the Traffic Light method. For extra visual support, have students color the illustrations and highlight the text with the appropriate colors. For each point on the Tool, provide this additional explanation.

**Organization is the key**. Planning before writing is key to a writer's success. *All* writers plan, whether they are students or published authors. Using the Traffic Light colors while making informal outlines is a visual strategy that will help students organize their ideas. (For more about informal outlines, see strategy **S4-3 Planning with an Informal Outline**.)

- **Topic sentences are the heart**. Color the heart green. Tell students that the topic sentence or thesis statement is the heart of a paragraph; it gives the paragraph its shape. It tells readers where the writer is *going*. (For more about topic sentences, see strategy **S4-10 Defining Topic Sentences and Thesis Statements**.)
- **Transitions are the glue for the key/star ideas**. Color the glue yellow. In informative/explanatory writing, transitions introduce the sentences that contain key/star ideas (big ideas) that support the topic sentence. The transitions are like glue; they hold ideas together. They are yellow to remind writers to *slow down* and make those transitions. (For more about transitions, see strategy **S4-24 Definition and Function of Transitions.**)
- **Examples, evidence, and explanation are the meat.** Color the meat red. Examples, evidence, and explanations support each key/star idea. They are red so that writers remember to *stop* and explain. (For more about elaboration, see strategy **S4-16 Paragraph Elaboration—the E's/the Reds**.)
- **Conclusions tie it all together with a ribbon**. Color the ribbon green. A conclusion should give readers something to think about. Green should remind students that the conclusion needs to be tied to the (green) topic sentence or thesis statement. The writer needs to *go back* to the topic sentence and make a strong, meaningful connection to it—not just copy it. (For more about conclusions, see strategy **S4-32 Conclusions—Defining Terms.**)

**Craft and Style:**

**What is a Key/Star Idea?**

The key/star ideas are big ideas or broader categories that support the topic or thesis. Key/star ideas may be *facts*, *reasons*, or *details*. However, in order to clearly differentiate the three types of writing, *reasons* are used largely in argument, *facts* in informative/explanatory, and *details* in narrative.

6. Display **Tool S4-1b**. Encourage students to color and highlight the illustrations and corresponding text as a visual reminder of the Traffic Light colors and elements.
7. Have students use highlighters to color-code the paragraph on **Tool S4-1b** on their own while referring to the Traffic Light colors as needed. When they are finished, model the correct color coding on your display copy and have students check their work. The color coding should be as follows:
   - Green: First and last sentences (introduction and conclusion)
   - Yellow: The three sentences with transitions and key/star ideas
   - Red: All other sentences that are elaboration, explanation, examples, or evidence

**Note:** Though yellow is for slowing down and making transitions, the yellow highlighting should appear on the entire sentence that contains the transition, even though the sentence may also contain some elaboration.

**Differentiation:** Color-Coding the Elements of Informative/Explanatory Paragraphs

If students are having difficulty identifying the elements of informative/explanatory paragraphs, have them practice color-coding paragraphs they have written or example paragraphs from classroom materials, online sources, and magazines. In addition, remind students to put the strategy to work whenever they develop informal outlines (see strategy **S4-3 Planning with an Informal Outline**).

## S4-2 The Organization Game—Informative/Explanatory Writing

| Objective | CCSS ELA |
|---|---|
| Students learn to categorize ideas by sorting a collection of words and phrases into broad topics, key/star ideas, and supporting details (the E's). | **W** 6.2a; **S/L** 6.1<br>**W** 7.2a; **S/L** 7.1<br>**W** 8.2a; **S/L** 8.1 |

### Before Class

1. Make display copies and student copies of **Tool S4-2a**, **Tool S4-2b**, and **Tool S4-2c**.
2. Print multiple copies of **Tools S4-2a** and **S4-2b**, for small group use. Cut apart the word boxes on each sheet and store each set of 30 pieces in a separate resealable plastic bag.
3. Print a copy of **Tool S4-2c** for each student.

### During Class

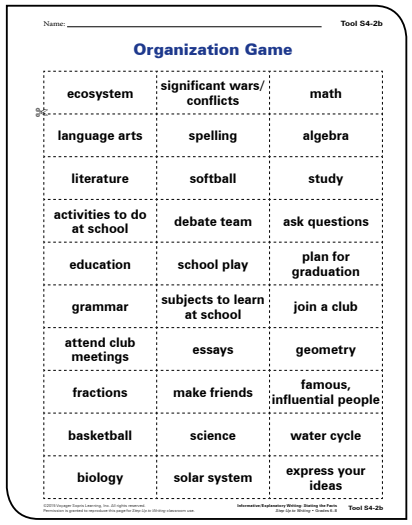
4. Tell students that they will sharpen their skills in sorting ideas into topics, key/star ideas, and supporting details (the E's: explanation, elaboration, experiences, everyday life, examples, expert opinion, events, exact information, evidence, effective illustration, and effective quotations) through this activity.
5. Display **Tool S4-2a** and note that the 30 ideas shown are a mixed collection of broad topics, key/star ideas, and E's. The activity will focus on:
   - Identifying the three topics

Name: _____ Tool S4-2a

**Organization Game**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| states | school resources | sports |
| get help with research papers | create graphics | Virginia |
| California | skiing | Florida |
| winter sports | check out books | tennis |
| New York | Oregon | read magazine articles |
| the library | summer sports | East Coast states |
| find reference materials | Rhode Island | snowboarding |
| ice skating | find books | the computer lab |
| West Coast states | write papers | Maine |
| Washington | search the Internet | use reading programs |

Tool S4-2a



Name: _____ Tool S4-2b

**Organization Game**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ecosystem | significant wars/ conflicts | math |
| language arts | spelling | algebra |
| literature | softball | study |
| activities to do at school | debate team | ask questions |
| education | school play | plan for graduation |
| grammar | subjects to learn at school | join a club |
| attend club meetings | essays | geometry |
| fractions | make friends | famous, influential people |
| basketball | science | water cycle |
| biology | solar system | express your ideas |

Tool S4-2b

- Sorting the remaining items into key/star ideas that fit with each topic and details (E's) that support each key/star idea

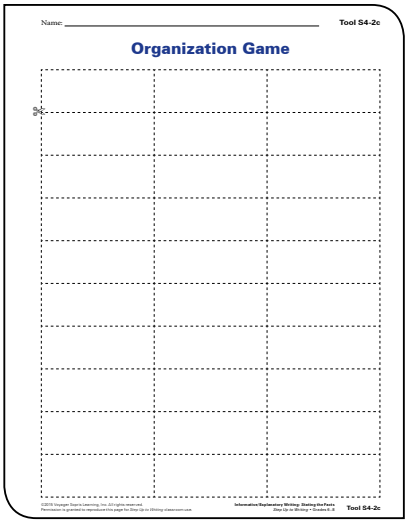
6. Assign students to small groups and give each group a bag of pieces from **Tool S4-2a** to share.
7. Model the sorting process by reviewing and discussing the ideas on the Tool. With student suggestions, identify and highlight the broad topics on the Tool (states, sports, and school resources). Continue working with students to identify and highlight the relevant key/star ideas and supporting details. Ask students to give reasons for their choices.
8. Have students collect **Tool S4-2a** pieces and return them to their bags.
9. Give each group a bag with the pieces from **Tool S4-2b** and have them sort the cards in their groups. If students get stuck, help them discover that this collection has only one topic (education) and two key/star ideas (activities to do at school includes subjects to learn about at school). All of the other pieces are the E's.
10. When the sorting is complete, talk about the relationships of sorted ideas to the format of an informal outline. Make sure students understand that the topic name is the biggest idea, the next words or phrases name key/star ideas, and the supporting words name details (the E's) within the key/star ideas.
11. Have students return the pieces of **Tool S4-2b** to their bags.
12. Using **Tool S4-2c**, have students independently develop their own sets of word cards based on topics recently studied in their classes. They must fill in all 30 boxes but can use any number of broad topics, key/star ideas, and E's.
13. Remind students that key/star ideas can be:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| problems | events | issues | people |
| places | features | qualities | feelings |
| kinds | traits | types | characteristics |

14. Have students write an answer key in informal outline format such as:

**Topic**

- Key/star idea
  - Detail
  - Detail
- Key/star idea
  - Detail
  - Detail


Name: _____ Tool S4-2c

**Organization Game**

Tool S4-2c

Tool S4-2c

## Craft and Style:

### Classification

Classifying concepts or sorting items into categories organizes and prioritizes information:

*Increased public transportation, added bike lanes, and improved sidewalks will decrease traffic congestion, provide access to downtown businesses, and boost the economy.*

(See strategy **S4-3 Planning with an Informal Outline** and strategy **S4-4 Informal Outlines of Various Lengths** for more information on informal outlines.)

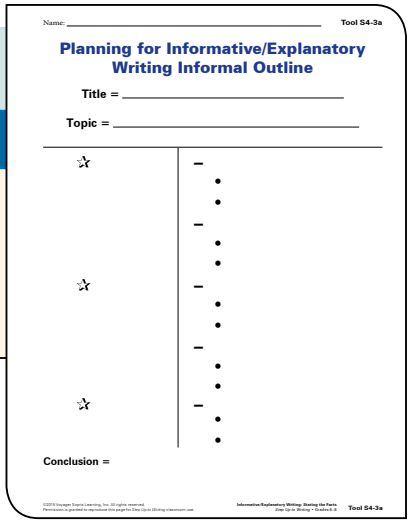
15. Assign students to pairs. Have students share their word cards and informal outlines with each other to check each other's work.
16. Remind students that sorting and categorizing ideas is a good exercise for planning any informative/explanatory writing assignment. It also helps students review and understand discipline-specific vocabulary they encounter in their studies.

**Differentiation:** Sorting Topics, Ideas, and Details

To aid kinesthetic learners, recreate the Organization Game from **Tool S4-2a** and **Tool S4-2b** on small cards. Have groups of students agree on a set of topic, key/star ideas, and details, and then arrange themselves in order, holding the word cards, as if they are part of an informal outline.

## S4-3 Planning with an Informal Outline

| Objective | CCSS ELA |
|---|---|
| Students learn to visualize and plan the organization of informative/explanatory text. In doing so, they are reminded that planning is an important step in the writing process. | **W** 6.2a-b, 6.2d, 6.4; **S/L** 6.1; **L** 6.3<br>**W** 7.2a-b, 7.2d, 7.4; **S/L** 7.1; **L** 7.3<br>**W** 8.2a-b, 8.2d, 8.4; **S/L** 8.1; **L** 8.3 |


Name: _____ Tool S4-3a

Planning for Informative/Explanatory Writing Informal Outline

Title = _____

Topic = _____

Conclusion =

Tool S4-3a

### Before Class

1. Make display copies and student copies of **Tool S4-3a** and **Tool S4-3b**.
2. Have green, yellow, and red (or pink) highlighters available.

### During Class

3. Display **Tool S4-3a**. Remind students that good writing always starts with a plan. Planning is the key to writing success. An informal outline is an effective way to organize ideas before writing. (For more about the writing process, see strategy **S2-3 The Writing Process**.)
4. Use **Tool S4-3a** to introduce the parts of an informal outline. Point out the lines for Title and Topic at the top of the outline. Explain that key/star ideas are listed on the left. The elaboration (dashes and dots) is listed on the right.
5. Model the process for filling out an informal outline as follows:
   - Write the draft title related to the topic at the top of the page. Tell students that they can always change the title later.
   - Brainstorm aloud the key/star ideas or the important ideas about the topic.

10

SECTION 10

# INTRODUCTION
## Writing in the Content Areas

## *Step Up to Writing* in Content Areas

Writing in the content areas is a win-win for both writing skills and content-area learning. Using *Step Up to Writing* across disciplines will improve writing proficiency, test scores, and also comprehension in the content areas, as students encounter the same high expectations schoolwide. Writing across the content areas has been shown to produce significant improvement in students' writing abilities (van Allen, 1991) and helps "students connect the dots in their knowledge" (The National Commission on Writing, 2003).

Writing promotes learning and critical thinking in all contexts. With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS ELA) has come an increased emphasis on writing across all content areas. All teachers, not just those who teach ELA, have shared responsibility for developing students' literacy skills (CCSS ELA, page 4). Schools must ensure that students read high-quality texts, synthesize information, and convey their understanding through informative/explanatory, argument, and narrative writing in content classes as well as in language arts.

### Content-Area and ELA Teacher Partnerships

Content-area and ELA teachers can benefit from close partnerships. ELA teachers can identify *Step Up to Writing* Strategies and Tools that support content-area writing. Content-area teachers can share curricular text and topics to incorporate into ELA assignments.

For proficient writers, *Step Up to Writing* strategies also can be used to fulfill the CCSS in Literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects by focusing student practice on informative/explanatory and argument writing using discipline-specific topics. Students progress to incorporating narrative writing into informative/explanatory and argument writing in forms such as accounts of historical events or descriptions of technical processes. These higher level standards assume that students can address increasingly demanding content with more advanced writing skills.

## Teaching Writing in the Content Areas

A common, valid concern that arises when implementing cross-content writing plans is a fear that content teachers must also teach writing conventions. This is not the case. Although writing conventions are important, the goal of writing across the curriculum is to use writing skills to learn *content*. Some content-area teachers assign complex writing assignments such as essays or research reports, but most content-area writing activities are short, informal writing tasks meant to help students review, synthesize, and apply their knowledge. The goal is to give students practice with the conventions, formats, and vocabulary of a specific discipline.

## Quick Guides for Content-Area Writing

The **Quick Guides** in this section are also available online at **www.stepuptowriting.com**.

As more demanding curriculum standards call for higher expectations for all students, content-area teachers must reinforce higher-level thinking and communication skills.

*Step Up to Writing* strategies help content-area teachers support students' understanding and communication of content-area texts and topics through the practice of essential reading and writing skills. This section contains Quick Guides, or lists of *Step Up to Writing* strategies that can be used to develop writing skills in the content areas.

To select *Step Up to Writing* strategies to use in the content-area classroom:

- Refer to the Quick Guides that follow. See the Core Strategies first for some useful strategies that can apply to all content areas, page 777.
- Review the Quick Guides by content area: math, page 779, science, page 780, social studies, page 782, and ELA response to literature, page 784.
- Consider the content-area tasks students must be able to perform, along with their ability levels and needs.
- Also consider beginning with **Section 1: Writing to Improve Reading Comprehension**. The strategies in this section are easy to introduce and teach, and they focus on skills, such as responding to texts, summarizing, and note-taking. These skills improve comprehension, which in turn improves writing. These strategies can be taught in a short period of time by using content that students are learning.
- Collaborate with ELA teachers to develop writing assignments. The ELA teacher can support content-area teachers in using the *Step Up to Writing* strategies.

For *Step Up to Writing* Teacher Resources, see **www.stepuptowriting.com**.

# Step Up to Writing®

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**Maureen Auman**

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- **Informative/explanatory, argument, and narrative writing**
- **Research skills** to build and present knowledge
- **Strategic use of technology** to locate information and publish work
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