

Instructional Strategies Menu

Organization - The structure, order and layout of a piece of writing.

Pull a Page -

When young writers have a book with many topics, remove staples and add blank pages to the page that focuses on the main topic. Encourage the student to write two new pages focused on that topic. The pages not used can go into the writing folder for future writing topics.

Beginning Middle & End -

Students draw three pictures and put them in order. Create a simple drawn template with three boxes (or provide three index cards). Can staple them together when finished.

Storyboard -

Encourage students to draw sketches of a story in their minds first, moving from setting to setting. Once the pictures are completed, they go back to add wording.

4 or 5 Word Organizer -

Use four/five different pieces of paper and write the following words at the tops of each: First, Next, Then, After That & Finally *OR* Who? Did What? But? So? Students use these guide words to write and draw their story.

Use Mentor Texts -

Use the structure of a mentor text to create a similar framework for a piece of student writing.

Use a Published Wordless Picture Book -

Use a wordless picture book as a framework for a student story.

Main Ideas & Details

Graphic Organizers -

There are many to choose from. Find & copy several. Choose one that works best for a particular student. Guide the student through completing it before letting him/her use it to write a story.

Post-It Nonfiction

Planning -

Start with four Post-It notes. One needs to be a different color than the rest. Students write their focus on the different colored Post-It Note. On the other three, they write the important details.

5-Finger Check -

Students retell their fiction story by using the five finger check (one element for each finger): characters, setting, problem, events & solution. They hold each finger up and show that part in their story.

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5-Finger Check (for nonfiction stories)-

Students retell their fiction story by using the five finger check for nonfiction. They state the topic first and then point out five details that teach about or support that topic in their writing. Add more if necessary.

Table of Contents Organizer -

Teach student to structure their nonfiction story by creating the table of contents first so subtopics are clear.

Spread it Out -

Have students spread out the pages of their draft in order on the floor. Look for pieces that need more details added or what pieces need broken apart or shortened. Discuss the logic of the sequencing.

Answer the Questions -

For nonfiction pieces encourage students to think of several questions others might have about their topic. Each answered question then becomes a part of the story.

Time Line of Events Post-It Organizer -

Guide the student to write different events for a story on Post-It notes. Then have the student put each one on a different page of the book. Add pages at the beginning and end for characters/setting & conclusion.

Cut It Apart -

At different parts in l-page story where pieces seem to be missing, use scissors to actually cut apart the paper. Attach to the various pieces to different pages of a blank book and add pages for the missing content.

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Ideas - The main idea or message of a piece of writing, including supporting details.

Personalized Idea Book -

Students create a writing ideas booklet to keep in their writing folder. The teacher sits and helps to brainstorm ideas for the book. This can be a spot for students to go when they are stuck.

Tell About a Time -

The teacher listens as a student tells a story of something that has happened to him/her. The teacher will take notes on Post-Its as the story is being dictated and place them throughout a blank book for the student to expand upon.

What If? -

The teacher and student together brainstorm three "What if...?" questions for the story. (Ex: What if your main character did something different at an important moment? What if the character changed feelings at some point?)

Photo Prompts -

The teacher compiles a folder of interesting photos for students to look at. Students pick one of interest and writes a story about it. (May also prompt a personal narrative.)

Strong Feelings Planner -

The teacher encourages the student to think of and write down a number of strong emotions and times when the student has felt them. The incidents can serve as prompts for writing.

Choose Your Own Story Pages -

Students use a story choice chart that includes various characters, settings and problems to write a creative piece. (These can also be separated and placed into baskets for students to choose from randomly.)

Souvenirs for Small Moment Writing -

Encourage students to bring a picture or souvenir from a vacation or other family event to help prompt a small moments piece.

Howdy Partner! -

The teacher strategically pairs two students for a shared author experience.

Ask Me Three -

The student reads a story and the teacher asks three questions about the story that will help provide more ideas for writing.

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Ideas - The main idea or message of a piece of writing, including supporting details.

<p>Zoom In - The teacher encourages the student to draw a picture with lots of details. Then the teacher helps the student to focus or “zoom in” on one part of the picture to create a small moment story.</p>	<p>What Do the Experts Say? - The teacher encourages the student to find books or online information to read before beginning a nonfiction piece so that information is presented accurately.</p>	<p>Premade Prompts - The teacher finds or creates several fun story prompts ahead of time. Students read and choose one that they feel they can expand upon.</p>
<p>Thematic Word Banks - Students choose from a set of premade word banks about various high interest topics to write a story. (This helps with students who get stuck because of spelling issues).</p>	<p>One Story Word Bank - Teacher listens to a story dictated by a student and quickly creates a word bank page as the student talks. Student uses the word bank to help write the story.</p>	<p>People Who Matter Most - Encourage the student to brainstorm a list of people who matter most to them. They can write about specific reasons why the person matters or attempt an interview & biography piece.</p>
<p>Take a Walk - Take one or more students who are stuck for ideas to write about on a walk and encourage them to use their senses to make observations about things they see.</p>		

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Voice - The personality of the writer expressed in a piece of writing in some way.

Partner Retell -

One student reads their story to a partner. Then the partner describes what they visualize. If the partner isn't able to get across what the author is trying to share and how he/she feels, then the information they DO provide gives the author hints about what to add. (This takes modeling!)

Use PAT!

(Purpose, Audience, Topic) -

Before or after writing, students can complete a PAT organizer identifying the purpose of their writing, the intended audience and the topic. Keeping the audience in mind helps to provide a stronger voice for a piece.

Speak It -

Encourage the student to add speech bubbles with words into their pictures to elaborate on what is happening and the characters' feelings.

Start with the Dialogue -

Encourage students to create a comic strip as their actual piece of writing or as the planner for a longer piece. (They can later use the comic as illustrations and maybe even take out the talk bubbles.)

Hal Hal

Humor Helps! -

Encourage students who have a good sense of humor to use that humor in their writing in some way. (jokes, puns, irony, etc.)

The Art of Persuasion -

If you have a student who is passionate about something, encourage him/her to use that passion to try to convince others to feel the same as (or differently than) they do.

Find Your Own Voice -

Encourage the student to read their writing aloud and pinpoint the voice they might say best describes it: silly, caring, peaceful, confused, sad, lonely, angry or fearful.

Dig a Little Deeper -

Pose the following question to the student and discuss it with them:
"How is this story different because YOU wrote it?"

One-on-One Mentor

Text Share -

For a student struggling to display any of their own voice in their pieces, choose a story with a strong voice and read it the student one-on-one, discussing what makes the author's voice stand out in the story.

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Voice - The personality of the writer expressed in a piece of writing in some way.

Show! Don't Tell -

Go through and highlight specific emotion words that the student used in the story. Encourage them to take those words out and instead describe the character or situation in a way that helps the reader to visualize what happened instead of simply reading the emotion word.

Surprise! Surprise! -

Read through the piece of writing with the student to find possible ways to surprise the readers. Surprising readers shows a strong sense of audience and the desire to engage them.

The Parts That are ME! -

Work with the student to find the words, phrases or sentences of the writing that distinctly show their individual personality, their honesty or their enthusiasm for the topic. Discuss ideas for adding more of this in the writing.

Take a Stand! -

For writing ideas that showcase a student's voice, "interview" the student to find topics they feel strongly about. Make a list together and encourage the student to write on one of the topics.

Create a Character Map -

For narrative writing, encourage students to create a character map for their main character. The better they "know" their character, the more likely they will be able to write so the reader does too.

Put Yourself in Another's Shoes -

Encourage the student to rewrite their story and tell it from the point of view of someone else. How would a toddler tell this story? A mom? A dog? An inanimate object?

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Word Choice - The words, or combinations of words, a writer uses to show meaning in a piece of writing.

Flag It! -

Put post-it flags on details shown well in a student's pictures. Students write about what is going on where the picture is flagged and then remove the post-it.

The goal is to add the details in the writing that are displayed in the pictures.

Close Your Eyes &

Visualize -

Students choose one image from their story to describe aloud in detail. They brainstorm as many words/phrases/sentences as they can to describe the image as the teacher records the description on a notecard. Then the words are shown to the student and can be added to the story.

Use Your Senses -

Encourage the student to create a list to describe what they (or the characters) would hear, feel, see, taste or smell in the events from their story. They can use the list to add more descriptive words to parts of the story.

Break It Down -

Model for the student how to break down the writing into sentences or smaller parts, read them aloud and ask the question, "Are those EXACTLY the right words to show what I mean to say?"

Can I make my writing more clear or descriptive?"

Use Action, Not Description -

Encourage the student to isolate the adjectives used in their writing and change those to verbs somehow. (Ex: Instead of saying "The loud man..." say "The man's voice roared like a lion." Or instead of "The sad little girl..." say "The little girl hung her head as tears dropped.")

Add Sound Vrrrooom! -

Help the student find parts where onomatopoeia would add some voice to the piece. Tell them to think about the sound, say it aloud and then write the matching word(s).

Be Precise -

Help the student find places in their writing that they can be more precise. (Ex: instead of "dog", use the name of the breed.)

Use a Thesaurus -

Highlight words that could be more interesting in the story and then show the student how to use a thesaurus to find replacements.

ABC's Please -

For a nonfiction piece have the student brainstorm topic related words for every letter of the alphabet (if possible). They can use the list to add to their writing.

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Word Choice - The words, or combinations of words, a writer uses to show meaning in a piece of writing.

Word Choice to Show Voice -

Have the student read the story aloud and guide them to finding parts that don't sound like something they would say if they were speaking. Ask them to change the wording to show their true voice.

Audience Matters -

Ask the student about the intended audience. After clarifying who he/she is writing for help the student find words that should be changed to suit the audience better. (Ex: If the story is for younger kids, is the vocabulary too difficult?)

What's All the Hyperbole? -

If there are places in a story that could be exaggerated for effect, teach the student about hyperbole in writing to extend meaning (Ex: I died laughing. It took you a million years.)

Same Old, Same Old -

If a student uses the same word several times in a story, bring it to his/her attention and have them circle it each time they come to it while reading. Help them to find words to replace the overused word.

Mood Matters -

Teach the student how to better show mood by providing an example. Write a simple sentence such as "The child walked across the street" and provide the mood or context to change the sentence. To show drama you might change it to "The wide-eyed toddler stumbled through the fast moving cars to the other side."

Instructional Strategies Menu

Writing Fluency - The varied use of sentences (or phrases) in order to create a rhythm and flow to a piece of writing.

Sentence Flipping -

If sentences are too similar in structure, show the student how to take one sentence, use the same words and flip them to create a new structure. (You might need to write it on a sentence strip and cut the words apart to help.)

Put 'em Together -

For a student who uses short choppy sentences, model how to combine the sentences using words like *and, or, but & because* along with commas.

Beef It Up! -

Help the student to "beef up" shorter non-detailed sentences by adding phrases at the beginning to tell *when, where, why* or *how*.

Down for the Count -

Sit with the student and count the words he/she has used in each sentence. If the sentences all tend to have the same (or about the same) number of words, model how to change one or two of them to add more interest to the story.

Appositively Perfect! -

If a student needs to add clarification and sentence variety, show them how to use appositives as another way to describe characters or objects.

Fix the Fragments -

After the student reads each sentence, ask them the following questions and then have them check their sentences to make sure the information is there. "Who/What? Did What? Where/When/Why?"

Expanding Sentences Word by Word -

Pull a short sentence from the student's story, write it on a piece of paper with words far apart and then help them to make it more interesting by asking leading questions. (Ex: The puppy is small. *Ask: What color is the puppy? Add that word. Whose puppy was it? Let's add that.*)

Sentence Guide Boxes -

To help early writers with a sentence to describe a picture, use a guide box presented in a table format. The top row of boxes is the guide with the words: Description, Who or What? Did What? Where, When or Why? Students fill in the boxes under the guide to write a sentence.

Here's Your Stop Sign! -

For run-on sentences, use a stop sign cut out shape. Have students read their story aloud and put up the stop sign at points where they might think about adding ending punctuation and begin a new sentence. (This could also be done as you read the piece and the student listens for possible stopping points.)

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Writing Fluency - The varied use of sentences (or phrases) in order to create a rhythm and flow to a piece of writing.

Varied Sentence

Beginnings -

Have the student underline the beginning 3 to 4 words of each sentence. Together look at them to see if they all begin the same way. If so, work to change the wording in some of them.

Memorable Endings -

If the student is ending a story with the words "The End", discuss how the final sentence can have a big impact. It can be something surprising, something funny or even a question. Discuss the tone of the story and what type of ending sentence might improve the story.

Use Mentor Texts -

If students don't understand the concept of writing fluency, read and discuss mentor texts to illustrate what it means. (Ex: Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin Jr. & John Archambault, The Napping House by Audrey Wood or Roller Coaster by Martha Frazee.)

Use Your Punctuation -

Varying sentence types helps with writing fluency. Have students count the number of statements, questions and commands in their writing. Perhaps have them highlight their ending marks.) After counting, work to change a few of them to different types.

Try a Little Alliteration -

To create more interesting writing fluency guide the student to try alliteration in one or more sentences. Illustrate by reading some examples from a classroom book such as Some Smug Slug by Pamela Duncan Edwards or Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse by Kevin Henkes.

Add a Phrase or Two -

Encourage students who write mostly short sentences to add a phrase or two to some of them to make them more descriptive and interesting. First they isolate a short sentence and then think of phrases that would make them better.

Writer's Notebook -

A writer's notebook is a great place to add ideas to vary sentences. Add pages to include lists of transition words, synonyms, types of figurative language, interesting leads, etc. Students use the notebook as one way to revise their writing.

Instructional Strategies for Teaching Ideas in Writing
