

THE COLLINS WRITING PROGRAM

# IMPROVING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Through Writing and Thinking  
Across the Curriculum

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TEACHER RESOURCES

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*The Collins Writing Program: Improving Student Performance Through Writing and Thinking Across the Curriculum* is a revised and expanded version of *Developing Writing and Thinking Skills Across the Curriculum* originally published in 1992.

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# Contents

Introduction .....	v
CHAPTER <b>1</b> <b>Five Types of Writing Assignments</b> .....	1
CHAPTER <b>2</b> <b>Creating Types Three and Four Writing Assignments</b> .....	47
CHAPTER <b>3</b> <b>Essential Writing Assignments</b> .....	61
CHAPTER <b>4</b> <b>Highly Recommended Assignments</b> .....	84
CHAPTER <b>5</b> <b>Classroom Snapshots: Adapting the Collins Program</b> .....	104
CHAPTER <b>6</b> <b>Clarifying Expectations Outside the Classroom</b> .....	109
Misused/Misspelled Word List I .....	113
Misused/Misspelled Word List II .....	114
Works Cited .....	115

# Five Types of Writing

## Type ①: Capture Ideas

**Type One** writing gets ideas on paper—brainstorming. Type One is timed and requires a minimum number of items or lines. Questions and/or guesses are permitted. Evaluated with a check (✓) or minus (-).

## Type ②: Respond Correctly

**Type Two** writing shows that the writer knows something about a topic or has thought about the topic. It is a correct answer to a specific question, graded as a quiz. *One draft.*

## Type ③: Edit for FCAs

**Type Three** has substantive content and meets up to three specific standards called focus correction areas. It is *read out loud* and reviewed to see if the draft meets the following criteria: completes the assignment, is easy to read, and meets standards set by the focus correction areas. Revision and editing are done on the original. *One draft.*

## Type ④: Peer Edit for FCAs

**Type Four** writing is Type Three writing that is *read out loud* and critiqued by another. *Two drafts.*

## Type ⑤: Publish

**Type Five** writing is error free and of publishable quality. *Multiple drafts.*

## For All Types

**For all types**, skip lines. For Types One and Two, label the type on top left-hand side of paper. For Types Three and Four, list focus correction areas on top left-hand side. Type Three and Four papers should be saved and used to practice editing skills.

COLLINS WRITING PROGRAM

## REVISION and EDITING SYMBOLS

### Notes on Editing and the Collins Writing Program

The Collins Writing Program has five types of writing, but in Types One and Two, teachers typically do not comment on problems of mechanics or conventions; therefore, editing symbols are not needed. In Types Three and Four, editing comments are usually limited to the areas covered by the focus correction areas (FCAs). In Type

Five, teachers act as true editors, helping students produce an error-free paper.

The symbols listed below are standard symbols used by editors with the exception of the \* which indicates a positive comment. Don't forget the \*. Everyone likes to know the positive!

^ Insert

**frag.** Sentence fragment

¶ Paragraph

? Hard to understand

↵ Delete

**W.C.** Incorrect word choice

≡ Capitalize

**\*voice** Strong voice

/ Lowercase,  
not a capital

**\*lead** Good beginning

**sp** Spelling

**\*close** Strong conclusion

**rs** Run on or  
fused sentence

**\*detail** Good detail

## Create a Seven Element Writing Assignment Worksheet

Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Assignment Summary and Rationale

#### Writer's Purpose(s)

*Analytical/Expository • Practical/Informative  
Sensory/Descriptive • Imaginative/Narrative*

Persuade • Inform • Describe • Entertain • Multi Purposes

#### Writer's Role

Yourself	Book character	Friend
Teacher	Textbook writer	<b>Other:</b>
Family member	Expert in field	
Historical figure	Scientist	
School administrator	Journalist	

#### Audience

Student at lower grade	Expert in field	Parent
Next year's class	Magazine readers	<b>Other:</b>
School administrator	Concerned citizen	
Student who has missed class	School committee member	

#### Form

Study guide	Journal	Editorial	Email/Fax
Diary	Bumper sticker	Definitions	Test
Song/Rap	Obituary	Biography	Play
Children's book	Slogan/Motto	Summary	Report
Advertisement	Interview	Directions	Brochure
Job description	News report	Letter	Fable
Explanation	Application	Memo	Speech
Advice column	Wanted poster	Poem	<b>Other:</b>
Collection for future classes	Post card	Retelling	

FCA

Pts.

FCA

Pts.

FCA

Pts.

**Optional FCAs to accommodate or challenge students**

Pts.

**Procedures**

- Read your paper out loud in a one-foot voice. Check for any confusing parts.
- Edit your FCAs following your teacher’s directions.
- Option: Type Four: Have a partner read your paper out loud to you. Get feedback on your FCAs. Write a second draft with all your improvements.
- Final draft due on \_\_\_\_\_.

## The Ten Percent Summary: Telling the Main Points of a Nonfiction Article

**Project Summary** A landmark study (*Writing Next*) examined all the research on what activities help students improve their writing skills. Second from the top of the list was a surprising result: write summaries. As it turns out, writing a summary helps students read better, study more effectively, remember the information longer, and practice the skills needed to write a research paper. In addition to these benefits, writing a summary is great training for the reading sections of state tests and for the SAT and ACT. The skills needed to write a summary will help when looking for main ideas, and every reading test includes questions about the main ideas. While there are many opinions about what makes a good summary, most people agree on the following characteristics:

- ▶ Summaries are significantly shorter than the original
- ▶ Summaries follow the organizational pattern of the original
- ▶ Summaries include the main ideas
- ▶ Summaries do not include the opinion of the person who wrote the summary
- ▶ Summaries paraphrase the original author's words

This assignment is a specific type of a summary, called a ten percent summary; that is, a summary of an article that is only ten percent of the original length. A ten percent summary is best used to condense nonfiction or expository writing that is between 500 and 2,000 words long, the length of most passages on reading tests and many magazine or newspaper articles.

**Writer's Purpose** You will write the main ideas in your own words. Include the most important details if the word limit permits. You will want clear and accurate information with no opinion. Remember, this is a summary—not an evaluation.

**Writer's Role** You will take the role of a researcher or analyst who has been hired by MainIdeas.com to distill information for interested adults.

**Audience** Your audience will be busy, smart adults who want to get the main ideas of articles to see if they should read the article completely.

**Form** You will write a summary of your assigned article in approximately ten percent of the words—not exactly ten percent, but approximately ten percent. For example, if you have a 1,000 word article, you would write a 90 to 110 word summary; if 1,250 words, write 110 to 140 words.



### Focus Correction Areas

1. Include S. A.“T”. (source underlined, author, title appears in quotes) in the summary \_\_\_\_ points
2. Include \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ main points in approximately ten percent of the words \_\_\_\_ points
3. To be determined \_\_\_\_ points

### Procedure

Before submitting your summary, you will complete several activities.

- Read the article once through quickly, then take care to read the first few paragraphs (10 to 20 percent of the article) carefully. The first few paragraphs usually contain the author’s position on the topic. Read the first sentence of the middle paragraphs (middle 60 to 80 percent of the article) carefully. They usually tell the main ideas. Read the last paragraphs (last 10 to 20 percent of the article) carefully. They usually sum up the main points.
- Draft your summary. You may want to keep a running word count by occasionally noting how many words you have written over the end marks of your sentences. With this technique, you always know about how close you are to your word count goal of ten percent of the words.
- Read your summary in a one-foot voice; make any changes that you believe will improve your draft.
- Work with a partner to peer edit your paragraph and get feedback.
- Rewrite your second draft with all your improvements.
- Due date \_\_\_\_\_.

### Samples of “to be determined” FCAs

- ▶ Correctly include a specific number of technical words from the article. For example, use 5 of the 10 words highlighted by the teacher.
- ▶ Include one short, correctly punctuated quotation (3 to 6 words) in your summary.
- ▶ No more than 4 words in a row taken from the original text.
- ▶ Conventions (for example: spelling, complete sentences, capitalization, correct use of commas, legible handwriting).

## Vocabulary Cards: Using Cards to Master Technical Vocabulary

### Project Summary

To demonstrate knowledge in a field, one must be able to use the vocabulary of that field, but your textbook introduces vocabulary a little at a time and then doesn't review it. Consequently, you may learn the vocabulary for the chapter test and never study it again! To learn and really remember, it is more effective to study frequently in short bursts than to study just once for a long time. When it comes to learning vocabulary, one of the easiest and most efficient ways is with vocabulary cards. This assignment requires that you create your own set of vocabulary cards. In fact, just creating the cards will help you begin to remember the words. Do your best. We will be repeating this assignment frequently during the year. You'll end up with an impressive collection of vocabulary cards. Also, I'll be testing on vocabulary all year long, and I will include words from the full year, not just the last unit—so don't lose your cards.

### Writer's Purpose

You will create clear information, with accurate definitions of important concepts or words. In addition, you will write a sentence using each vocabulary word that will help you remember the word and its meaning.

### Writer's Role

You will be writing as yourself, a concerned student who sees this assignment as a relatively easy way to get a good grade and produce something that will help you learn. (It is interesting to note that there are companies that hire writers to produce vocabulary cards; for example, the Princeton Review has tear-out vocabulary cards in the back of its College Board prep books, and Spark Notes produces boxed sets of vocabulary cards in a wide range of subjects.)

### Audience

You will be creating these cards primarily for your own use, but you may find that it is helpful to study cards created by other students.

### Form

Print the word on one side and an illustration that helps you remember the word. Side two has the part of speech (noun, verb, etc.) and meaning or meanings of the word. Side two should also have an original sentence that helps convey the meaning of the word through the context. See example cards for more detail.

### Focus Correction Areas

1. \_\_\_\_ cards with word and complete definition (part of speech and meaning or meanings) \_\_\_\_ points
2. Complete sentence that conveys meaning of the word \_\_\_\_ points
3. Graphic illustration \_\_\_\_ points

## Procedure

- Before submitting your vocabulary cards, you will complete several activities.
- Using a Type One writing assignment, generate a list of all possible relevant vocabulary words for the current topic.
- Using the list generated in the above step, we will create a final list of important or critical words for the cards, while eliminating any obscure or obvious vocabulary words.
- Create first draft of cards, due on \_\_\_\_\_.
- Share your cards with a partner to make sure they are accurate and fulfill the requirements set by the FCAs.
- Final draft of cards with all improvements due on \_\_\_\_\_.

## FOCUS SHEET Sample Vocabulary Cards

Side One

Word: Alopecia

Illustration:



Side Two

Definition: Noun—loss of hair, baldness

Sentence: To cure alopecia, people will spend money on hair plugs, wigs, medicine, and vitamins.

Side One

Word: Dice

Illustration:



Side Two

Definition: Verb—to cut into small pieces of about the same size.

Sentence: We had to dice the carrots again because we cut them unevenly.

Side One

Word: Jargon

Illustration:



Side Two

Definition: Noun—specialized vocabulary of a trade or group. Also, words difficult to understand.

Sentence: Now that I've studied medical technology for two years, I know so much medical jargon I sound like a doctor, or should I say physician.

Side One

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Illustration:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Side One

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Illustration:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Side One

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Illustration:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Side One

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Illustration:

Name \_\_\_\_\_



Side One

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Illustration:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Side One

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Illustration:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Side One

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Illustration:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Side One

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Illustration:

Name \_\_\_\_\_



Side Two

**Definition:**

**Sentence:**

Side Two

**Definition:**

**Sentence:**

Side Two

**Definition:**

**Sentence:**

Side Two

**Definition:**

**Sentence:**

Side Two

**Definition:**

**Sentence:**

Side Two

**Definition:**

**Sentence:**

Side Two

**Definition:**

**Sentence:**

Side Two

**Definition:**

**Sentence:**



## Similar, but Different: Comparing and Contrasting When the Differences Are Subtle

### Project Summary

Being able to identify the differences between two things that are similar requires careful observation, insight, and precise thinking. Learning this process of comparison and contrast is not only a skill you will use during your education but throughout your life—when you select a college, buy a car, choose a job or career, or vote for a candidate. In this project, you will be writing for a student who will be taking this course next year and who values your advice on how to make the distinctions you are making.

### Writer's Purpose

Your purpose is to be analytical, identifying and clarifying similarities and differences.

### Writer's Role

You are writing as a student who “knows the ropes” in this course and can pass on helpful information to a future student.

### Audience

Your audience is a future student who will appreciate your help in making the distinctions you are making in this piece of writing. Your choice of language for this project should be precise and reflect your knowledge of the topic.

### Form

Your explanation will be a multi-paragraph analysis.

### Focus Correction Areas

1. At least \_\_\_\_\_ similarities between the two \_\_\_\_\_ points
2. At least \_\_\_\_\_ distinctions between the two \_\_\_\_\_ points
3. To be determined \_\_\_\_\_ points

### Procedure

Before submitting your analysis, you will complete several activities.

- Type One writing: Write down why you think \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ might be confused in the minds of a less-experienced student. Why would someone confuse the two?
- Create a list of characteristics or traits that you can use to compare and contrast.
- Use the Focus Sheet for Comparing and Contrasting to determine the similarities and differences.
- Draft your explanation. Due on \_\_\_\_\_.

- Read your paper in a one-foot voice; make any changes you feel will improve your explanation.
- Work with a partner and get feedback on your analysis; double-check your FCAs to make sure you have done a good job in those areas.
- Write a second draft with all your improvements.
- Due date \_\_\_\_\_.

Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Comparing and Contrasting Matrix

	Item 1	Item 2	How Similar or Different?
Characteristic 1			
Characteristic 2			
Characteristic 3			
Characteristic 4			
Characteristic 5			
Characteristic 6			



## The Short Persuasive Essay: Taking a Stand on an Issue

### Project Summary

Students who take the SAT or ACT are often required to take a stand on an issue or agree or disagree with a quote. Even if you will never take these national college admissions exams, you will be confronted over time with opinions of others and will have to make a clear case for your beliefs. In this assignment you will be given a quotation or an issue and asked to take a stand—to agree or disagree. Since the actual SAT test is 25 minutes long, you will be given just 25 minutes to complete this assignment.

*(Teacher will insert relevant quotation or issue in the space below.)*

### Writer's Purpose

Your purpose is to take a clear stand (or position) and defend your opinion in a persuasive way.

### Writer's Role

You will write as yourself, a student with an opinion.

### Audience

Your audience will be your teacher and classmates. You could also imagine readers from across the country who do not know you and have been hired to read and score your essay.

### Form

You will write a multi-paragraph essay in 25 minutes.

### Focus Correction Areas

1. Clear statement of opinion \_\_\_\_ points
2. Two to three compelling reasons with supporting details (one or two reasons must be academic) \_\_\_\_ points
3. To be determined \_\_\_\_ points



## Procedure

Before submitting your assignment, you will complete several activities in class:

- Fill in the Short Persuasive Essay Focus Sheet.
- Draft your essay.
- Read your draft in a one-foot voice; make any necessary changes to improve your essay.

Optional Steps:

- Work with a partner to peer edit and get feedback; double-check your FCAs to be sure you have completed the assignment.
- Rewrite your second draft with all your improvements.
- Due date \_\_\_\_\_.

## Samples of “to be determined” FCAs

- ▶ Strong conclusion
- ▶ Four part thesis statement
- ▶ Sentence variety
- ▶ Use one ? or ! sentence
- ▶ A short, catchy title
- ▶ An opposing position/refuted
- ▶ Clear organization (paragraphs and/or transitions)
- ▶ Two or more vivid verbs, circled
- ▶ Avoid the generic “you”
- ▶ Avoid colloquial language
- ▶ Use specific detailed examples—avoid the hypothetical
- ▶ Complete sentences
- ▶ Correct spelling—especially of common words (your, you’re)

## Notes on the Short Persuasive Essay Focus Sheet

The short persuasive essay, usually about 30 minutes, has become the standard for many writing tests. Some states require a persuasive essay in the third and fourth grades, and these essays continue on to the SAT and ACT for college admissions and are used in the adult world in job applications. Being a good persuasive writer is a skill you can use for the rest of your life.

Persuasive essay questions or prompts can usually be grouped into one of two kinds. One kind of prompt asks a question and then asks the writer to create an answer and argue why the answer is a good one. An example of this kind of prompt is this eighth grade question from Oklahoma:

If you could live during a different period in history, what period would you choose? Why would you make that choice? Support your ideas with details.

The hardest part in this type of prompt is to remember to brainstorm choices before you begin to write so that you have a choice you can defend with reasons and details. Also, if you have time, you can explain why you rejected one of the choices from your list.

The second kind of prompt, one you would see on the SAT or ACT, requires you to agree or disagree with a position. Here is an example from the ACT:

Many high school libraries use some of their limited funding to subscribe to popular magazines with articles that are interesting to students. Despite limited funding, some educators support this practice because they think having these magazines available encourages students to read. Other educators think school libraries should not use limited funds to subscribe to these magazines because they may not be related to academic subjects. In your opinion, should high school libraries use some of their limited funding to subscribe to popular magazines? In your essay, take a position on this question. You may write about either one of the two points of view given, or you may present a different point of view on this question. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

The Short Persuasive Essay Focus Sheet is helpful for both kinds of persuasive essays but may be most helpful with the agree/disagree kind by providing an outline of reasons for and against almost any topic. It then provides a quick, effective way of turning the reasons into a clear thesis statement. Be patient. The first few times you use the focus sheet may be time consuming, but as you practice using it, you will become quicker and your plan for your essay will come together faster, leaving more time to focus on your writing skills. Remember, the persuasive essay is a writing test. There is no right or wrong answer. The test scorers want to see how you develop your ideas in writing, not if you found the “right” answer.

**FOCUS SHEET**

**Short Persuasive Essay Sheet—  
HELPS: Getting and Organizing Your Ideas**

REASONS FOR

REASONS AGAINST

**H** Historic, Political, Legal

**H** Historic, Political, Legal

**E** Economic, Resource Utilization

**E** Economic, Resource Utilization

**L** Literary, Aesthetic

**L** Literary, Aesthetic

**P** Personal, Ethical, Religious

**P** Personal, Ethical, Religious

**S** Scientific

**S** Scientific

Position	→ Yes	Reason 1 _____
	→ Under certain conditions/circumstances	Reason 2 _____
	→ No	Reason 3 _____

**THESIS STATEMENT:** Topic / Position / 2 to 3 Reasons without “I.”

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## Writing a “Who Am I?” Autobiographical Sketch about a Classmate

### Interviewing a Classmate and Using the Information for an Autobiographical Sketch

#### Project Summary

This assignment will help you practice three essential skills: listening, speaking and writing. These are important skills for this class—and for life. In this project, you will use all these skills as you get to know some of your new classmates. Over the next several days, you will have time to interview three different classmates. Then I am going to ask you to use your notes to write a “Who Am I?” autobiography about one of the classmates you interviewed. You will write the sketch as though you are that classmate and include information that would allow others to guess who “you” are.

#### Writer’s Purpose

Your purpose is to be informative. Your goal is to tell enough about the person you interviewed to enable classmates to guess that person’s identity. Feel free to be entertaining, but do not embarrass the classmate you are describing. No cheap shots!

#### Writer’s Role

After gathering information about your classmate, you will write a “Who Am I?” autobiography in the first person (use I) as though you were that person.

#### Audience

You are writing for your classmates who may not know a great deal about “you.” Based on the information you provide, they will be trying to guess who “you” are.

#### Form

This assignment will be an autobiographical sketch (15-25 lines) about “you.”

#### Focus Correction Areas

1. Accurate information—eight to ten facts (use information from your questionnaire, but do not use any physical characteristics) \_\_\_\_ points
2. Write in first person (use I, never he or she) \_\_\_\_ points
3. To be determined \_\_\_\_ points

#### Procedure

Before submitting your autobiographical sketch, you will complete several activities.

- Type One writing: In six lines or more, describe the kind of information you think should be included in an autobiography



to make it informative and interesting. We will discuss your responses in class.

- We will review the suggested questions on the Interviewer’s Notebook Focus Sheet. You may add other questions of your own.
- During three different class meetings, you will spend part of each period interviewing a different classmate (and being interviewed by that classmate). Take notes and label them.
- On the fourth day, I will announce which of the three interviews I want you to turn into the “Who am I?” autobiography.
- Draft your autobiographical sketch. Due date: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Read your draft in a one-foot voice; make changes you feel will improve your piece.
- Work with a partner to get feedback on your autobiographical sketch; double-check your FCAs to make sure you have done a good job in those areas.
- Write a second draft with all of your improvements.
- Due date: \_\_\_\_\_.

## Interviewer's Notebook

### Questions About Family

Do you have brothers or sisters? Names? Ages?

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What is one interesting fact about a member of your family?

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---

Have you ever lived in another community? How does it compare to this one?

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Does your family have any special customs or traditions?

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### Questions About Interests

What are your favorite or least favorite...

Foods

---

---

Books, TV shows, movies or videos

---

---

Hobbies

---

---

Class in school

---

---

Ways to kill time

---

---



## Questions About the Past and Future

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be? Why?

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What career or job goals do you have? College plans?

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---

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What would be the perfect age? Why?

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---

---

What awards or special recognition have you earned?

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---

---

What do you think your friends would say are your best attributes?

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What was your proudest moment?

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Do you have any suggestions to the teacher that would help make this class the best possible experience?

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## Other Questions

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## Class Log

### Creating a Description of Class for a Student Who Was Absent

#### Project Summary

This year our class will keep a class log—a day-by-day description of what went on in each class. The log by itself is a three-ring binder with two sections: the back section has blank class log worksheets, the front section is for completed class logs. Each day two members of this class are responsible for filling out class log sheets and inserting them in the log. As a result of this assignment, we will have an accurate record of our class meetings that will be especially helpful for students who are absent or who have missed class. It will also help me make sure I do what I said I would do when I said it. By having two students complete the assignment each day, we will have a way of cross-checking for accurate information.

#### Writer's Purpose

This assignment is both informative and practical: writing in which the main intent is to provide clear information.

#### Writer's Role

You will be writing as yourself.

#### Audience

Write to students in this class, especially those who missed class. Try to be as complete and clear as you can.

#### Form

Fill out the class log worksheet page provided in the class log. The completed worksheet is due at the beginning of class the next school day. The worksheet may be handwritten or typed, but it must be easy to read.

#### Focus Correction Areas

1. Each section must be answered accurately. If there is nothing to write in a section, indicate that; do not leave a section blank \_\_\_\_\_ points
2. Attach any handouts and announcements to your class log worksheet \_\_\_\_\_ points
3. To be determined \_\_\_\_\_ points

#### Procedure

- Make sure you know which day you have responsibility for the log. Since two students per day fill out the log, it should be easy to determine how frequently your turn will come up.
- Take careful notes in class. If you want, you may take two worksheets, one to fill out in class and one to recopy for the final copy.



- ❑ If you have any questions about the accuracy of your information, check with your classmates, but do not check your log with the one other classmate assigned to complete the log on your day—do them independently!
- ❑ When you have finished, read it out loud, check it for the FCAs and do not forget to sign, date, and put it in the log book. If you forget to put it in the book on time, you will not receive credit for the assignment.



## Create a Test

### Creating a Possible Test for the Unit the Class Has Just Studied

#### Project Summary

Now that we are close to the end of this unit, it is time to think about a test. This assignment requires you to create a test for this class.

Tests often have two types of questions: objective and essays. Examples of objective test questions are multiple choice, true/false, and fill-ins. Objective questions require specific information. Essay questions, especially well-written essay questions, do not test specific facts as much as they test ability to analyze, explain, or argue. This assignment requires you to create ten objective questions (multiple choice, fill-in, or true/false) and two essay questions.

#### Writer's Purpose

This writing assignment requires practical/informative writing skills; that is, all the questions should be clear and easy to understand.

#### Writer's Role

You will be writing as if you were the teacher. Your goal is to create a fair test that questions students on the most important elements in the unit.

#### Audience

Write to the students in this class. If I receive a test that is well done, the creator will not only get an A for this assignment, but will also have the benefit of taking the test he/she created.

#### Form

You will create ten objective questions. For each objective question, include the correct answer in the margin beside each question. Additionally, you will write two essay questions with two or three FCAs each. You do not have to answer the essays. Remember, a good essay question does not need to be extremely difficult, but it should require the person answering it to think and analyze, not just remember facts. When designing the test, assume students will have about 10 minutes for each essay and about 10 to 15 minutes for the objective section. The total test should take about 35–40 minutes.

**Focus Correction Areas**

1. Ten clearly written, objective questions with answers in margin \_\_\_\_\_ points
2. Two essay questions with 2–3 FCAs each \_\_\_\_\_ points
3. Complete sentences and correct spelling of all words. (Watch for question marks at the end of your questions.) \_\_\_\_\_ points

**Procedure**

- Review all materials, notes, etc., you have on this unit. Determine what is most important.
- Create your questions, both objective and essay, with FCAs, due in class on \_\_\_\_\_.
- In class on \_\_\_\_\_ we will turn your test from Type Three writing to Type Four through oral reading and peer editing.
- Your final draft—Type Four—of the test is due in class on \_\_\_\_\_.

## Study Guide

### Predicting, Explaining, and Answering Essay Questions

#### Project Summary

Many times the hardest part of preparing for a test is determining what is important to study and what is not. This assignment asks you to create a study guide for the unit we have just finished by creating two essay questions, explaining why these questions are important, and then writing answers to the questions.

#### Writer's Purpose

This assignment requires practical/informative writing; its main intent is to provide clear, accurate information organized as correct answers to potential essay test questions. Feel free to use your notes and any other relevant sources.

#### Writer's Role

You will be writing as yourself. Any insight you can bring to help another student prepare for the unit test will be appreciated.

#### Audience

Imagine you are writing to a classmate who has missed a substantial number of classes. The student needs your help to determine which questions are most likely to appear on the test and the answers to these questions.

#### Form

Your study guide should take the form of two, three-part essays. In each part you should state one essay question, explain why it is an important question, and then correctly answer the question. Your sentences should be clear, and your paragraphs well organized and easy to read. The final product should be \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ handwritten lines long.

#### Focus Correction Areas

1. List two important essay questions with focus correction areas and explain to your reader why you picked each of these questions \_\_\_\_\_ points
2. Correctly answer the two essay questions you created \_\_\_\_\_ points
3. To be determined \_\_\_\_\_ points

#### Procedure

- Read and review your textbook and any other resources on the unit.
- Try to anticipate any questions that might be asked on the unit test.

- Make a list of at least seven questions and then select the best two.
- Check to see if the information you have answers the questions you selected. Get help if you need additional information.
- Discuss your questions and the information you have with a classmate.
- Draft your study guide. List each question, then the reason why the question is important and likely to be asked on a test and, finally, answer each question. Due date \_\_\_\_\_.
- Read your draft out loud. See if it is easy to read and check for the FCAs.
- When you are confident the draft is accurate and well done, have another student read it to you out loud and listen for problems in the FCAs.
- Make any necessary revisions or edits and recopy.
- Final study guide due date \_\_\_\_\_.

## End of Unit Reflection

### Writing a Letter to a Future Student Describing How to Do Well in Class

#### Project Summary

Now that we have completed a major unit, I would like you to reflect on how you did. To do this, I am asking you to write a letter to a student who will be taking this course next year. Assume this student is very much like yourself (same or similar work habits, interests, etc.). Tell this student how you did and give advice on how to do well on this unit next year.

#### Writer's Purpose

This assignment is part analytical/expository and part practical/informative. In the first part of your letter you must analyze how you did in this unit and why. In the second part you must give clear information to next year's student about what to do to be successful.

#### Writer's Role

You will be writing as yourself.

#### Audience

A student, one year from now, who is about to begin the unit we just finished. Assume this student is similar to you—has your work habits, academic strengths and weaknesses, and your out-of-class responsibilities.

#### Form

This is an informal, Type Three friendly letter, addressed to next year's student. Don't worry about addresses, etc., just title it "Letter to Next Year's Student" on the fifth line down.

#### Focus Correction Areas

1. Analyze how you did and why \_\_\_\_\_ points
2. Give three specific suggestions to next year's student on how to do well on the unit we have just completed \_\_\_\_\_ points
3. To be determined \_\_\_\_\_ points

#### Procedure

- Think about your grades for this unit and review your study habits, class performance, homework, etc., during this unit. List things you did well and what you could have improved.
- List some recommendations or suggestions for next year's student.
- Write up your ideas from the first two steps into a letter due on \_\_\_\_\_.
- In class on \_\_\_\_\_, we will improve these letters through oral reading and revising.



## It's a Must! Making Thoughtful Recommendations

### Convincing Your Teacher About the Importance of Certain Aspects of This Class

#### Project Summary

Making well-considered recommendations is something we do throughout our lives. In this writing assignment, you will make recommendations to me that will influence the way I teach this course in the future.

My problem is that there is always more content to teach in this course than there is time to teach it. My goal is to spend more time on fewer, critical aspects of our subject. Some of the ideas, concepts, and skills we have spent time on cannot be eliminated because they are critical to the course or prerequisites for other things we do in this class.

Which units, chapters, readings, or projects have we completed that you feel are essential for this course and deserve even more time? If we are to spend more time on those areas, then something must be eliminated or de-emphasized. Which aspects of this class do you feel are not essential?

I need your recommendations as I make plans for teaching this course next year. You will put your recommendations to me in the form of a letter.

#### Writer's Purpose

Your purpose is to be persuasive, so be sure that your recommendations are supported with solid reasons and examples.

#### Writer's Role

You will write as yourself, an experienced student who has a good understanding of what is and what is not critical to this course.

#### Audience

You are writing to me, your teacher. I am open to your ideas or I would not be giving this assignment, but I also will be more easily convinced if your tone is respectful and well thought out.

#### Form

You will write a multi-paragraph letter.

#### Focus Correction Areas

1. Two or three "Musts" (describe two or three aspects of this class you feel are essential; for each, give several specific reasons why they must be kept) \_\_\_\_\_ points
2. Two "Cuts" (describe two aspects of this class that you feel could be eliminated or given less emphasis; for each, give specific reasons) \_\_\_\_\_ points
3. To be determined \_\_\_\_\_ points

## Procedure

Before submitting your letter, you will complete several activities.

- Type One writing: Write eight lines or more about the essential skills or concepts that an incoming student must master in order to succeed in this class or lab.
- As a class, we will discuss how we have allocated our time this year by reviewing major projects, units of study, and other activities, and approximately how much time we have devoted to each.
- After this discussion, decide which are essential and which are nonessential aspects of this class. Draft your letter. Due on: \_\_\_\_\_.
- Read your draft in a one-foot voice; make any changes you feel will improve your letter.
- Work with a partner to get feedback on your letter; double-check your FCAs to make sure you have done a good job in those areas.
- Write a second draft with all of your improvements.
- Due date: \_\_\_\_\_.

## Letter to Next Year's Teacher (and possibly others)

### Reflecting on What You Have Learned

#### Project Summary

There was a famous teacher at Columbia University, John Dewey, whom people credit with the phrase, “Learn by doing,” but that is not what he said. What he said was that you learn by reflecting on what you have done. This assignment will give you a chance to do exactly that. You will write a letter to next year's teacher describing what you did this year, how you feel you did overall, and what assignment you liked the most.

When you have successfully completed the assignment, you will have had a chance to “reflect on what you've done,” and your next teacher will get an insight into your strengths and weaknesses and will, therefore, be better able to teach you.

#### Writer's Purpose

This assignment is both informative and analytical. Give details about what you have learned, analyze your strengths and weaknesses, and describe your favorite assignment.

#### Writer's Role

You will be writing as yourself, trying to be honest and clear, and ultimately making a good first impression on next year's teacher. Use this chance to show how insightful you are about yourself.

#### Audience

Most teachers who give this assignment send it to next year's teacher. Some send a copy home to parents or guardians, and some teachers even make copies for student files for counselors.

#### Form

You will be given more details about how formal or informal this letter should be, but the letter should be at least five paragraphs. Include an introduction about yourself, at least three detailed paragraphs about each of the FCAs, and a concluding paragraph.

#### Focus Correction Areas

1. A descriptive summary of this year's program, including information about the numbers and types of assignments completed, the focus correction areas covered, procedures used in class, and any other information that would provide a detailed picture of the class \_\_\_\_\_ points
2. A description of your strengths and weaknesses with supporting examples and details taken from your own writing \_\_\_\_\_ points

3. A description of your favorite assignment or project completed during the year with supporting reasons and details \_\_\_\_\_ points

## Procedure

Before submitting your letter, you will complete several activities:

- In a series of Type One writing activities, you will make a list of the subject, units, topics, and assignments you have completed.
- You will share these lists to make sure they are complete.
- You will then place your list in chronological order.
- You will also list and group your strengths and weaknesses as a student in this class.
- Next, you will think about all your assignments and select the one that was your favorite. Give reasons and details to support your selection.
- You will then draft the three main parts of the letter (describe year, describe strengths and weaknesses, and favorite assignment). Be sure to include details and personal opinions.
- Once the three main parts of the letter are complete, you will write a one paragraph introduction with some personal information. You can include information about your family, goals, achievements, favorite subjects, how you like to learn, etc.
- To finish your draft, you will write a concluding paragraph summing up your first four paragraphs and ending on a positive note.
- Read your draft letter in a one-foot voice; make any changes that you believe will improve your draft.
- Work with a partner to peer edit the FCAs and get feedback.
- Rewrite your second draft with all your improvements.
- Due date \_\_\_\_\_.

Dear Parent(s):

This year your child will be writing a great deal because I want my students to be intellectually active. To achieve this purpose, I will be using the Collins Writing Program, which involves giving five different types of writing assignments. Some assignments are designed simply to help students get their ideas on paper or to discover what they already know about a topic. These assignments are called **Type One** assignments and are evaluated very simply—did the student do it or not? Type One assignments are not designed to be compositions or essays. They are simply ways to guarantee that your son or daughter is thinking about a topic.

**Type Two** assignments require that students provide the correct information in response to a specific question. In Type Two writing, I do not judge the quality of the writing—just the content. Type One and Type Two writing assignments are designed to be completed quickly and to promote thought.

**Type Three** and **Type Four** writing assignments are designed to produce ideas and to develop writing skills. Type Three and Type Four writing assignments use a concept called focus correcting. Focus correcting is based on the belief that student writing improves more quickly when the student works to improve a few writing problems at a time. It will be hard for me not to correct every error on every paper, but this year, for Type Three and Type Four assignments, I will be indicating errors on each paper in usually three areas. These areas will be explained and announced in advance so that my students can focus their energies on them. The focus correction areas will be listed on the top left-hand side of each Type Three or Type Four writing assignment.

**Type Five** writing assignments are the most difficult because they require the student to produce publishable work, that is, work that is as free as possible from all errors. In some cases students will do a Type One assignment, edit and revise it so that it becomes a Type Three or Type Four, and finally polish it so that it becomes a Type Five. The Collins Writing Program will help me encourage my students to think, take chances, formulate ideas, and polish their ideas into finished compositions.

Parents often ask, “How can I help?” Here are a few suggestions: First, be aware of the five types of writing assignments and realize that sometimes writing assignments will not have to be perfect. Be a helper and an encourager, not a critic. Provide a quiet place to write with good lighting and a dictionary. Talk about the assignments and help your daughter or son get many ideas. And, if you are asked to review a composition, read it out loud. Ask if it sounds right. You’ll be surprised at how many of their own mistakes they will be able to hear.

If you have any questions or comments about this program or about anything else we are doing, please call.

Sincerely,



# Misused/Misspelled Word List I

a lot	height	success
all right	hundred	surprise
allowed	interesting	than
another	it's/its	their/there/they're
are/our	knew	then
asked	laid	they
beautiful	led	threw/through
because	length	to/too/two
believe/belief	lets/let's	tomorrow
bought	library	truly
calendar	lose/loose	Tuesday
children	mother	twelfth
choose/chose	ninety	until
clothes	no/know/now	used to
coming	off	usually
course	once	Wednesday
definite(ly)	passed/past	we're/were
divide	people	weird
doesn't	precede	went
doubt	pretty	where
enough	principle/principal	woman/women
escape	probably	you're/your
every	receive	_____
February	said	_____
finally	school	_____
for/four	science	_____
forty	sense/since	_____
friends	separately	_____
fright	social studies	_____
grammar	some	_____
hear	something	_____
heard	strength	_____

## Misused/Misspelled Word List II

absence	immediately	ridiculous
accommodate	independent	schedule
affect/effect	indispensable	secretary
amateur	jealous	seize
apartment	knowledge	simile
assignment	laboratory	sincerely
athletic	maintenance	sophomore
attendance	mathematics	specifically
awfully	miniature	specimen
beginning	misspell	statue
business	necessary	subtle
cafeteria	noticeable	technique
capital/capitol	obscene	tragedy
commitment	occasion	transferred
condemn	occurred	tries
conscientious	parallel	tyranny
convenient	passed	undoubtedly
description	pastime	whether/weather
despise	permanent	_____
embarrassing	physical	_____
equipment	playwright	_____
exaggerate	pleasant	_____
excellent	possession	_____
existence	precede	_____
fascinate	privilege	_____
foreign	psychology	_____
generally	publicly	_____
government	pursue	_____
guarantee	recommend	_____
guidance	repetition	_____
harass	rhythm	_____

Type

Name

Date

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