

WRITING REPORTS



AGENDA

- Starter
- Prepare
- Put It Together
- Report
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize the importance of focusing on a topic and gathering information for writing a report.

Students will identify ways to paraphrase and organize information in a report.

Students will conduct interviews in preparation for writing reports.

Starter (3 minutes)

Write the following four sentences on the board:

- Put the second slice of bread on top of the one with peanut butter and jelly.
- Take the bread, peanut butter, and jelly out of the refrigerator.
- Pour a glass of water and enjoy.
- Spread the peanut butter and then the jelly on one slice of the bread.

Direct attention to the board. Challenge students to order the steps. Invite students to come to the board and number the sentences in the correct order.

Congratulate those who identify the proper sequence. Explain that organizing information or thoughts in a meaningful way is an important skill. In this lesson, students will learn how to organize information when writing reports.

Part I Prepare (10–15 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize the importance of focusing on a topic and gathering information when writing a report.

1. Students share their experiences with writing reports.

Explain that choosing a topic is the first step in writing a report. Point out that the more focused a topic is, the easier it will be to write about. For example, writing about bears in Alaska is easier than writing about animals in Alaska, and writing about a favourite movie is easier than writing about movies in general.

Ask students to name topics on which they've written reports. Ask them how they decided on the topic. (Students might respond: topics were assigned or were chosen because of interest.)

Suggest that students who have difficulty getting started on reports might wish to take notes during class today.

2. Students review how to research and take notes.

Tell students that the second step in writing a report is gathering information about the topic. Review what students have learned about using appropriate resources. Ask questions such as the following:

- If you were going to write a report about where chocolate comes from, how would you go about getting information? (Students might respond: go to the library. Get books or articles about chocolate. Look in an encyclopedia or on the internet. Ask a teacher, parent, or librarian to help you find information.)
- If you were going to write a report about how students in your class feel about school uniforms, how would you go about getting information? (Students should mention conducting a survey or interviewing students.)

Explain that the third step in writing a report is to take notes while gathering information. Point out that what students have learned about note taking should be applied to researching and gathering information. Remind students of the following:

- They should write down where they get their information.
- They should also check the spelling of names of people, places, or things carefully in order to spell them correctly in the report.

Part II Put It Together (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify ways to paraphrase and organize information in a report.

1. Students define “paraphrasing.”

Write the word “paraphrasing” on the board. Ask students to explain it. If necessary, explain that “paraphrasing” means “summarizing text or a quote in one’s own words.”

Explain that students can use facts, ideas, and information from their sources, but they should express them in their own words. Point out that in addition to citing sources, it is important not to copy someone else’s sentences and paragraphs when writing reports. This is called “plagiarism,” and it is a form of cheating. Tell students that plagiarism involves passing off another’s words or ideas as their own.

Answer any questions students have about paraphrasing. If necessary, read a sentence or short paragraph from a book and ask students to paraphrase, or retell in their own words, the most important ideas or information they heard.

2. Students identify ways to organize information.

Tell students that the fourth step in writing a report is organizing information. Explain that this is the step in which the writing begins.

Ask for suggestions on how students might organize their writing in a report. If necessary, remind students of how they ordered the sentences on the board at the beginning of class. Through questions and comments, prompt students to recall that their organization had a beginning, a middle, and an end. Explain that these three parts are called the “introduction,” the “body,” and the “conclusion” of the report. List the three parts on the board.

Have students discuss the three parts of a report. Prompt them by asking questions such as the following:

- Which part of the report do you think will be the largest? (The body will be the largest because it could have two or more paragraphs.)
- Why? (This is where most of the information will be.)
- What will happen in the first part? (The topic will be introduced.)
- What will happen in the last part? (A final paragraph will restate or summarize the main points.)

3. Students identify how to finish reports.

Explain that the fifth step in writing a report is making or organizing any visuals, such as maps, charts, or pictures. Point out that some reports may not need visuals, but others may be more effective with them.

Tell students that they may need to compile a list of all the sources of information used in the report. Ask if anyone knows what such a list is called. (Students should respond: a bibliography.) Suggest that each teacher may have special instructions for how the sources are to be listed in the bibliography.

Remind students to double-check their assignment before handing in a report. Sometimes, visuals and bibliographies are part of the assignment, but are forgotten.

Part III Report (15–20 minutes)

Purpose: Students conduct interviews in preparation for writing reports.

1. Students prepare questions for their interviews.

Tell students that they will conduct interviews in preparation for writing a short report. The report will be about a classmate’s favourite book, movie, or TV show. Give the following directions:

- To begin, choose a topic and write it at the top of a sheet of paper.
- List five questions you will ask. Be sure to include the following questions: Who? What? Why? Remember to leave plenty of room between questions so that you can take notes during the interview.
- Do not ask questions that will get you only a yes or no answer.

Give students a few minutes to write their questions. Check to make sure all students are finished before having them begin the interviews.

2. Students interview one another.

Divide students into pairs. Allow each student five minutes to interview their partner (using the questions they wrote) and take notes on the answers.

Give students a one-minute warning before they must change roles. When five minutes have passed, tell them to switch roles.

3. Students review their notes.

When the interviews are finished, have students review their notes for clarity. Ask if students have written the name of the person they interviewed and noted the interview topic. Give students a few minutes to clarify information.

Explain that students will use the information they have gathered from their interviews to write reports that will be due for the next class.

Conclusion *(2 minutes)*

Ask students to review the steps of writing a report. Ask them to review how to organize their writing, and to explain what paraphrasing is. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- When preparing to write a report, choose a topic and use appropriate resources to gather information about it.
- Organize your report into three parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion.
- Always paraphrase information in order to write the report in your own words.

Student Assessment

1. How do you choose a topic for a report?
2. List the steps in writing a report.
3. Explain the process of organizing information for a report.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“Diamonds are nothing more than chunks of coal that stuck to their jobs.”

Have students describe the report-writing steps that take ideas from the “coal” to the “diamond” stage.

Addressing Multiple Learning Modes

Have students use web graphic organizers to generate specific topic ideas. They may use topics from science or social studies class or from subjects they know well, such as their favourite types of music or a typical day in their lives.

Share sample webs on the board to demonstrate different ways of organizing the same material.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students write about their usual approaches to report writing, and then describe one new technique that will help them on their next report.

Have students discuss their journal entries in small groups.

Using Technology

Have students view news programs and note the structure of the host wraparounds and segments (i.e., tell them what you’re going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you’ve told them).

Have students write a paragraph summarizing/paraphrasing the introduction, body, and conclusion of one show segment. Have them share their reports with the class.

Homework

Have students use their notes from the peer interviews in Part III of this lesson to write reports about their partners.

Have students share their reports in small groups.

Additional Resources

Have students select a topic from *99 Jumpstarts for Kids: Getting Started in Research* by Peggy J. Whitley and Susan W. Goodwin. Have them read the directions for their selected topics, perform research, and write brief reports.

Have students present their reports to the class.