

Expository Writing

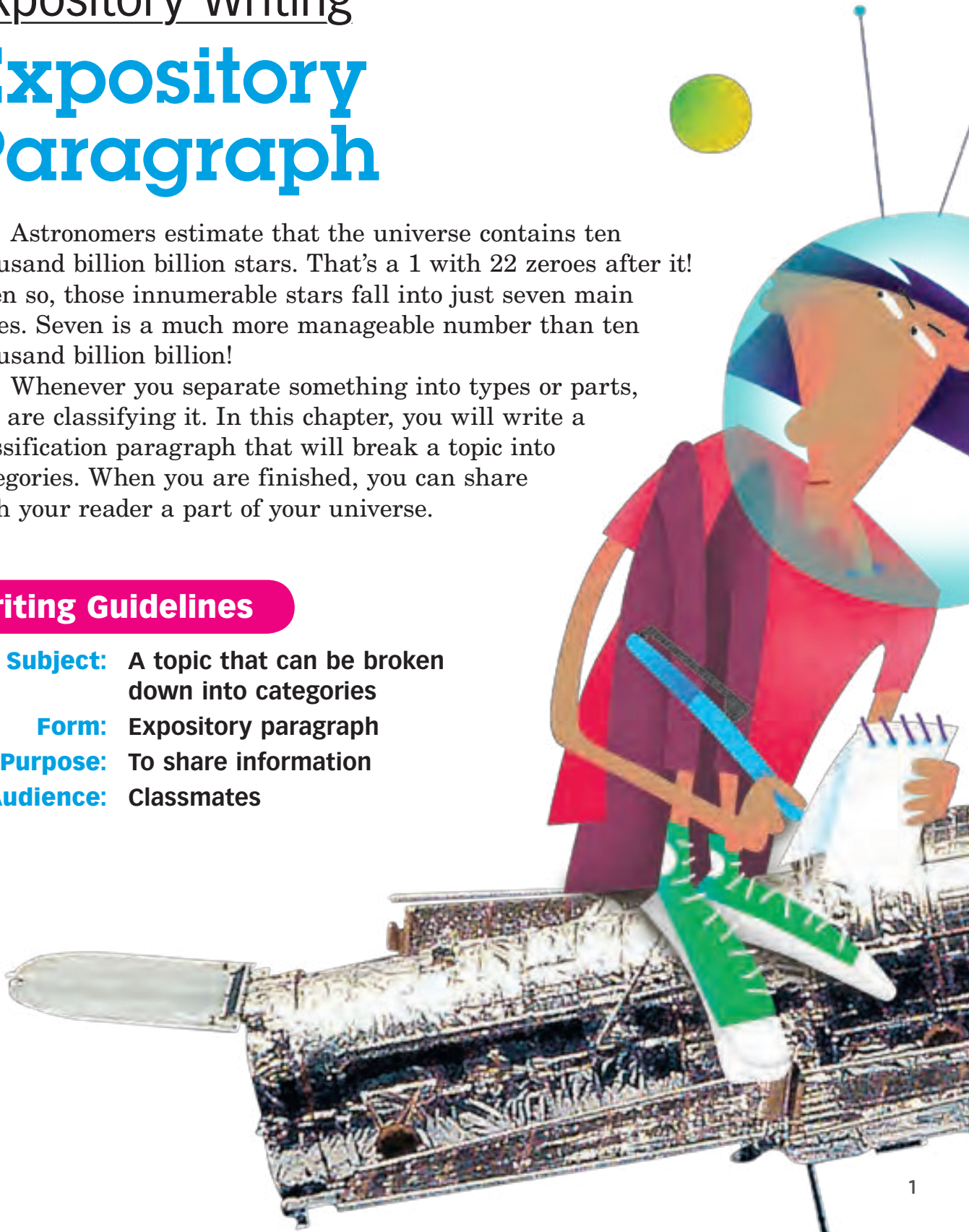
Expository Paragraph

Astronomers estimate that the universe contains ten thousand billion billion stars. That's a 1 with 22 zeroes after it! Even so, those innumerable stars fall into just seven main types. Seven is a much more manageable number than ten thousand billion billion!

Whenever you separate something into types or parts, you are classifying it. In this chapter, you will write a classification paragraph that will break a topic into categories. When you are finished, you can share with your reader a part of your universe.

Writing Guidelines

- Subject:** A topic that can be broken down into categories
- Form:** Expository paragraph
- Purpose:** To share information
- Audience:** Classmates



Expository Paragraph

The classification paragraph is a simple way to present the parts of a topic. It begins with a **topic sentence** that tells what the paragraph will be about. The **body** sentences that follow present the categories along with specific details about each. Finally, the **closing sentence** wraps up the paragraph. The following paragraph classifies the types of “planets” in our solar system.

Topic Sentence



Three Types of Planets

Body

Closing Sentence



People often think all planets are alike, but there are actually three types of planets in the solar system. The terrestrial planets are made of rock and metal and are closest to the sun. These include the midsize planets Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars. They rotate slowly and don't have many moons. Farther from the sun are the planets called gas giants, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune. They are called gas giants because they are formed from gases such as hydrogen and helium. Gas giants rotate fast and have many moons. Finally, planetoids are objects made up of rock and ice and are too small to be true “planets.” Planetoids sometimes even get pulled into a planet's gravitational field and become moons themselves. Whether they are terrestrials, gas giants, or planetoids, the planets in the solar system are fascinating.



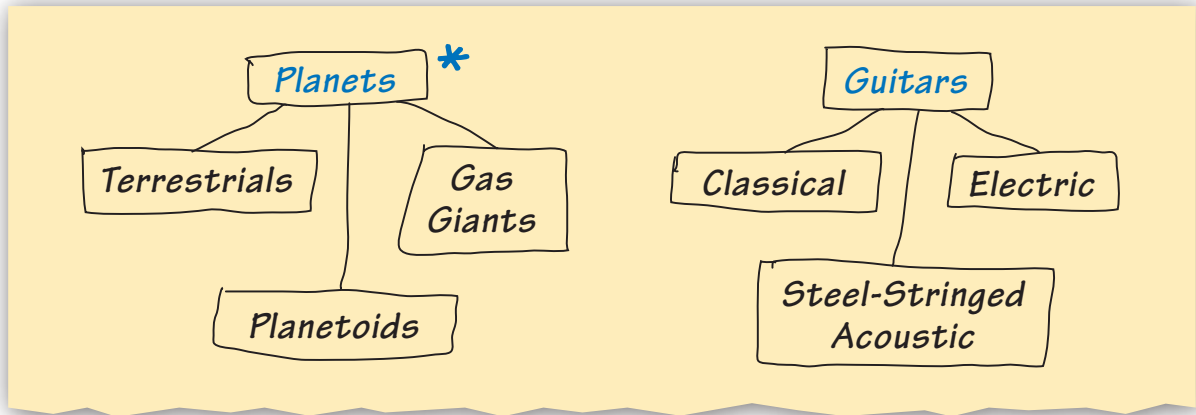
Respond to the reading. On your own paper, answer each of the following questions.

- ☐ **Ideas** (1) What three categories does the writer give?
- ☐ **Organization** (2) How does the writer organize the specific categories (order of location, order of importance, time order)?
- ☐ **Voice & Word Choice** (3) What words or phrases show that the writer is knowledgeable about the topic?

Prewriting Selecting a Topic

To select a topic, make a diagram. Select two things you know about and write them at the top. Then list the different categories that can be found in each topic. The writer of the paragraph on page 158 created the following diagram and put a star next to the topic she wanted to write about.

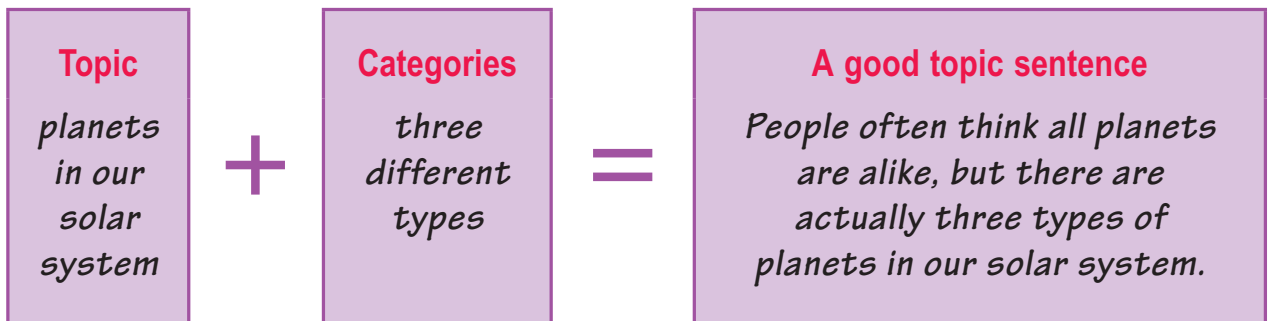
Line Diagram



Create a diagram and select a topic. Using the diagram above as a guide, create your own, listing two or three topics that interest you along with their categories. Put a star next to the topic you would like to write about.

Writing a Topic Sentence

Many subjects are too broad for a single paragraph. You can't sum up the universe, for example, in one paragraph. However, you can explain the types of planets in our solar system. Your topic sentence should (1) name the topic, and (2) mention its categories. A simple formula follows.



Write your topic sentence. Use the basic formula above to write a topic sentence for your paragraph. You may need to try a few different versions to make this sentence say exactly what you want it to say.

Writing Developing Your First Draft

A classification paragraph consists of a topic sentence, a body that explains the categories—with supporting details—and a closing sentence.

- Include your topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph.
- Write body sentences explaining your topic's categories and arrange them in the best possible order: order of importance, chronological (time) order, or order of location. (See page 551.)
- Sum up the topic with a thoughtful closing sentence.



Write the first draft of your paragraph. Write freely and don't worry about making mistakes. Just get all your ideas on paper.

Revising Improving Your Paragraph

After you finish your paragraph, check it for *ideas*, *organization*, *voice*, *word choice*, and *sentence fluency*.



Review your paragraph. Think about the following questions as you revise your writing.

- 1** Is my topic sentence clear?
What details should I add or remove?
- 2** Are my categories and details organized in the best way?
- 3** Do I sound knowledgeable about my topic?
- 4** Are my words clear and precise?
- 5** Do my sentences flow smoothly?
Have I included a thoughtful closing?

Editing checking for Conventions

After you revise your paragraph, check it for *conventions*.



Edit your work. Answer the questions below.

- 1** Did I use correct punctuation and capitalization?
- 2** Have I checked my spelling and grammar?

Proofread your paragraph. After making a neat copy of your paragraph, check it one more time for errors.

Expository Writing

Classification Essay

Medieval soldiers came in three varieties: foot soldiers, archers, and knights. Foot soldiers dressed in mismatched armor and carried simple weapons such as poleaxes or flails. Archers often wore no armor, but stood behind other troops to shoot their long bows. Knights wore suits of armor, fought from horseback, and used swords, lances, and shields.

When you identify the types or categories of something, you are using classification. In this chapter, you will write a classification essay. The key is to select a topic that you know well and can separate into categories.

Writing Guidelines

- Subject:** A topic that can be broken down into categories
- Form:** Classification essay
- Purpose:** To share information
- Audience:** Classmates



Understanding Your Goal

When you plan your expository essay, keep the following traits in mind. Understanding these traits will help you reach your goal of writing an excellent expository essay.

Traits of Expository Writing

Ideas

Choose a topic that can be broken down into at least three classes or categories. Then support each with a variety of interesting details.

Organization

Develop a precise pattern of organization for each category and clearly connect your details.

Voice

Use words and details that fit your purpose and connect with the reader.

Word Choice

Select precise words that clearly explain each of the categories.

Sentence Fluency

Write a variety of sentences that connect your ideas smoothly.

Conventions

Use punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar correctly.



Literature Connections: For another example of expository writing, read “Steam Rising: The Revolutionary Power of Paddleboats” from *The World Almanac*.

Classification Essay

In the expository essay below, the writer identifies and explains three types of armor that have been developed over thousands of years of history. The key parts of the expository essay are listed in the left margin.

Beginning

The beginning introduces the topic and presents the focus statement (underlined).

Middle

The first middle paragraph describes the first category and explains its drawbacks.

The second category is explained.

Centuries of Protection

Officer T. J. Cosford, a guest speaker at Cooper School, showed students a bulletproof vest. This type of body armor once saved his partner's life. While armor has been used throughout the ages, the materials used to make it have changed a great deal over time. From chain mail to steel suits to Kevlar vests, armor has protected people for centuries.

Even though armor had been around for more than 2,500 years, the first important change in armor took place around 1000 C.E. That was when soldiers began wearing chain mail. Chain mail was made of thousands of little metal rings hooked together. The thin rings formed a kind of metal cloth that could be draped around a soldier's body. It was lighter than a metal plate and could cover large areas of a soldier's body. However, chain mail was not perfect. It did very little to stop the impact of a blow from a sword. The chain mail wearer still could be injured or killed.

The next type of armor, the steel suits worn by knights in the 1400s, was a step up from chain mail. A complete suit had the following parts: a breastplate, a back plate, flexible arm and leg covers, gloves, shoes, and a helmet with a hinged door that protected the face. Besides being extremely heavy, the armored suits were expensive to make. Only the rich could afford to wear them. A knight needed people to help him get dressed and mount his horse for battle. Although these steel

Middle

The third middle paragraph describes the third category and explains its advantages.

Ending

The ending considers the overall importance of the topic.

suits offered excellent protection from weapons, they made movement very awkward. If he was knocked from his horse, a soldier in a suit of armor was as good as dead.

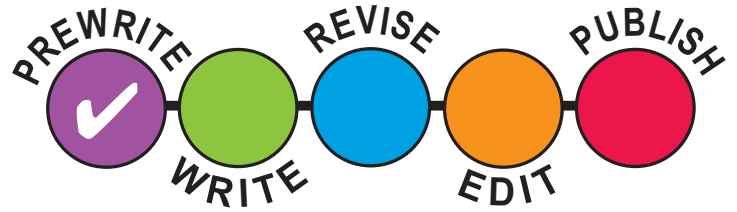
Today, the newest armor is made of plastics and man-made fabrics. One of these is Kevlar, invented in the 1970s. Kevlar is a lightweight fiber that is stronger than steel and more flexible than chain mail. With enough layers, Kevlar can stop a speeding bullet. The protective clothing items—helmets, jackets, vests, and boots—worn by today’s soldiers contain Kevlar.

People have always needed to protect themselves in battle, and through the years, they found newer and better ways to do it. Types of protection have evolved from chain mail and metal suits to man-made materials. Battle armor will continue to evolve as long as it is needed. Science fiction suggests that someday people may be protected by invisible force fields. In the meantime, people like Mr. Cosford will continue to rely on the latest forms of armor.



Respond to the reading. Answer the following questions about the essay you just read.

- ☐ **Ideas** (1) What is the writer’s topic? (2) What three main categories does the writer cover?
- ☐ **Organization** (3) Can you find the pattern that is used to organize each middle paragraph? Explain it. (4) How does the writer tie the ending to the beginning?
- ☐ **Voice & Word Choice** (5) How does the writer show personal interest in and knowledge of the topic? Give an example of each.

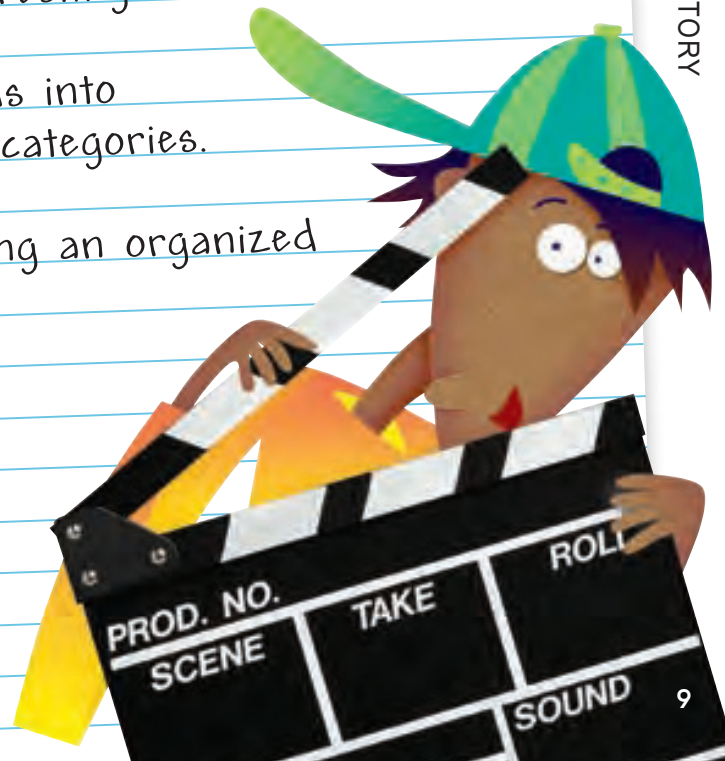


Prewriting

Prewriting is the first step in the writing process. It involves selecting a topic, gathering specific details, and organizing your ideas.

Keys to Effective Prewriting

1. Select a topic that you know well or one you would like to know more about.
2. Write a focus statement that clearly states the topic and mentions its main types or categories.
3. Gather details that will make your essay clear and interesting.
4. Organize your details into three or four main categories.
5. Plan your essay using an organized list or an outline.



Prewriting Selecting a Topic

The writer of the model essay on protective armor chose a topic that could be broken down into at least three main categories. Choose from the following general subjects for the brainstorming activity below.

clothing *education* *health* *occupation*
exercise *friends* *machines* *recreation*
food *goals* *art/music* *science*



Brainstorm for topics. To brainstorm for topics, you think freely about all the possibilities. You don't stop to think about any one idea. Just keep listing.

- 1** Select four general subjects that appeal to you from the list above.
- 2** On your own paper, draw a gathering chart like the one shown below. Write your four subjects on the top line.
- 3** List possible writing topics under each general subject.
- 4** Star the two topics that interest you the most.
(You will use these topics in the next exercise.)

Gathering Chart

RECREATION	GOALS	ART/MUSIC	SCIENCE
biking *	climbing a	photography	animal
canoeing	mountain	popular	defenses *
skateboarding		music	storms

Focus on the Traits

Ideas The writer of the sample essay on pages 163–164 wrote about a topic that interested both him and his classmates. The topic worked well because it could be divided into three main categories that could be supported with specific details.

Sizing Up Your Topic

Once you have selected two possible topics, you should test them to see if they can be broken down into three or four categories. Use the guidelines below to test your topics:

Too Broad . . . Topics that are too broad have too many categories to explore. For example, “animals” has so many categories that you couldn’t possibly cover them all in one essay.

Too Narrow . . . If a topic can’t be easily broken down into categories, it is too narrow. For example, “octopus ink” would be too narrow.

Just Right . . . “Animal defenses” could include three or four natural methods that animals use to protect themselves. It is just right.



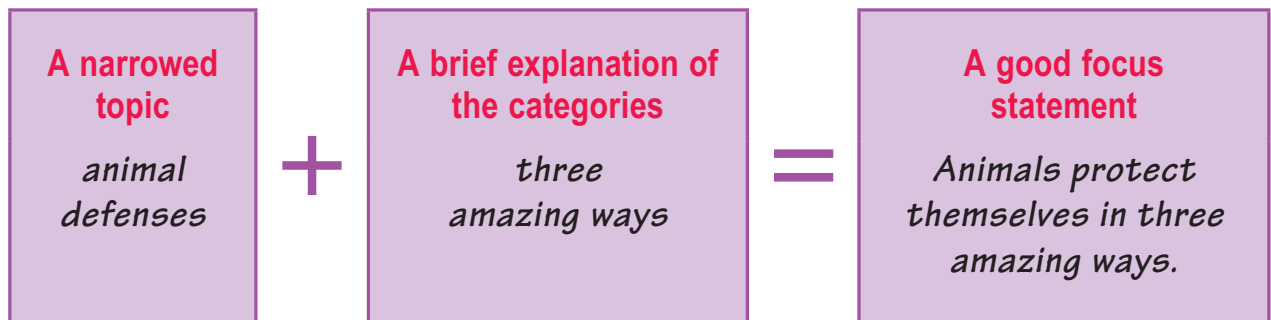
Choose your topic. On your own paper, write the two topics you starred in the exercise on page 166. Beneath each one, list at least three main categories of the topic. When you are finished, ask yourself the following questions about each topic. Then choose the better topic.

- 1** Does this topic have three or four main categories?
- 2** Could I find enough details to support each main category?
- 3** Is this topic *too broad*, *too narrow*, or *just right*?

Focusing Your Topic

Once you have selected a topic, it’s time to write a *focus statement* (also called a *thesis statement*). An effective focus statement identifies the topic you will write about and how it can be broken down. (Sometimes you may wish to actually name the specific categories in your focus statement.)

The following formula was used to write a focus statement for an essay about animal defenses.



Write your focus statement. Using the formula shown above, write a focus statement for your classification essay.

Prewriting Gathering and Sorting Details

Now that you have selected your topic and written your focus statement, you can begin gathering and sorting details. Sorting helps you see how many details you have for each category. Study the sorting chart below from the student essay about how animals protect themselves.



If you think of something you would like to add to your list, but you don't know enough about it, write it down as a question and circle it. Do whatever reading or researching is necessary to answer your questions.

Sorting Chart

<i>Changing Colors</i>	<i>Using Chemicals</i>	<i>Releasing Body Parts</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Snowshoe rabbits turn white in winter. - Cuttlefish turn colors. <p><i>Is there a color that cuttlefish can't change to?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skunks spray a stinky liquid. - Some frogs taste bad. - Octopuses shoot dark, cloudy ink. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Starfish drop arms. <i>Do they regrow their lost parts?</i> - Salamanders can regrow a leg or tail.



Create your sorting chart. On your own paper, draw a sorting chart like the one above. At the top, write the three or four main categories you've chosen to write about. Then, in each column, list specific details for each category and add any questions you may have.

Focus on the Traits

Organization If you are able to divide your topic into three or four main categories, you will also be able to easily divide your essay into clear paragraphs. Remember that each paragraph should address one main category of the topic.

Writing Topic Sentences

The topic sentence of each middle paragraph should clearly identify one of the categories. Each topic sentence should also include a transition that moves the reader smoothly from one category to the next. The writer of the essay on animal defenses used the topic sentences below to rate the defenses from least to most unusual. (For more information on topic sentences, see pages 552–553.)

Topic Sentences

Topic sentence 1: *One common way animals protect themselves is by changing color to blend in with their environment.*

Topic sentence 2: *A more unusual way animals avoid attack is by giving off a chemical that smells bad or clouds the surroundings.*

Topic sentence 3: *Perhaps the most amazing way animals protect themselves is by releasing a tail or another body part to get away when captured.*



Write your topic sentences. Use the above models to help you write your topic sentences.

- 1** Keep your focus statement in mind as you write each topic sentence.
- 2** Be sure each topic sentence addresses one of the main categories mentioned in the focus statement.
- 3** Include a transition to introduce or say something important about the category. (For more information on transitions, see pages 572–573.)

Focus on the Traits

Voice In a classification essay, you want to sound both interested and knowledgeable. Search for fascinating details and amazing facts to include in your writing.

Prewriting Organizing Your Ideas

The focus statement identifies the overall topic and main categories of the classification essay. Each category becomes a topic sentence in the actual essay.

Directions

Organized List

Write your focus statement (thesis).

Animals protect themselves in three amazing ways.

Write the first category.

1. *Changing color to blend in with surroundings*

List your first example.

– *Rabbit turns brown in summer, white in winter*

List your second example.

– *Cuttlefish changes to color of surroundings*

Write the second category.

2. *Using chemicals*

List your first example.

– *Skunk repels attackers with foul-smelling liquid*

List your second example.

– *Octopus squirts dark, inky fluid*

Write the third category.

3. *Releasing body parts*

List your first example.

– *Salamander and starfish drop a limb*

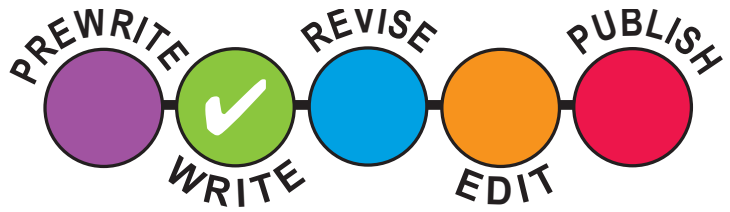
List your second example.

– *Gecko drops its tail to get away*

Make sure you have approximately the same number and kinds of details for each main category in your essay. When you revise, you will check for a balance of information from one paragraph to the next.



Make an organized list. To create your list, follow the “Directions” in the sample above. You will use this list as you write your essay.

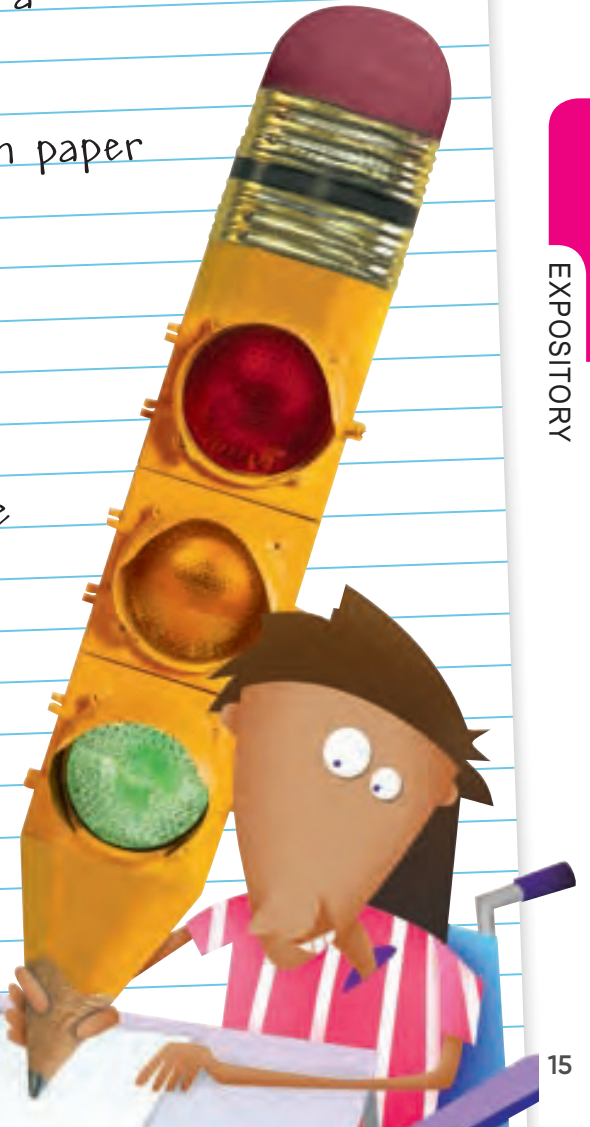


Writing

Once you've finished your prewriting, it's time to write your first draft. You're ready to write a first draft when you know enough about your topic and have written a clear focus statement.

Keys to Effective Writing

1. Use your organized list as a planning guide.
2. Get all your ideas down on paper in your first draft.
3. Write on every other line to make room for later changes.
4. Use a clear topic sentence for each paragraph.
5. Add specific details about each category.
6. Use transitions to tie everything together.



Writing Getting the Big Picture

Now that you have organized your categories into a logical order, you can begin writing your first draft. The graphic below shows how a classification essay is put together.

The opening paragraph contains a clear focus statement. The middle contains several supporting paragraphs, each one covering one main category of the topic. The closing paragraph sums up the essay. (The examples used below are from the sample essay shown on pages 173–176.)

Beginning

The **beginning** captures the reader's interest, introduces your topic, and gives your focus statement.

Focus Statement

Animals protect themselves in three amazing ways.

Middle

The **middle** presents each category of your topic. Each middle paragraph includes one category and strong supporting details.

Three Topic Sentences

One common way animals protect themselves is by changing color to blend in with their environment.

A more unusual way animals avoid attack is by giving off a chemical that smells bad or clouds the surroundings.

Perhaps the most amazing way animals protect themselves is by releasing a tail or another body part to get away when captured.

Ending

The **ending** reminds the reader of the essay's focus and suggests the importance of the topic.

Closing Sentence

However, without their amazing defenses, some animals would not survive.

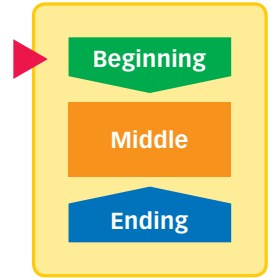


Look at the three middle paragraphs of the model essay on pages 163–164. On your own paper, list the details that support the topic sentence in each paragraph.

Starting Your Essay

Begin by writing your opening paragraph as freely as you can. This paragraph should make the reader want to read your entire paper. It should also introduce the focus statement.

Several ways to begin a classification essay are shown below. Each of these examples is written in a different voice, but any would offer an interesting beginning. You might use one or more of these to start your essay.



- **Share interesting or surprising details about the subject.** *They sting! They stink! They taste bad! What could “they” possibly be? They are animals that protect themselves in amazing ways.*
- **Ask a question.** *What if you could suddenly change colors and blend into the background?*
- **Give interesting background information.** *For years, people have found many ways to protect themselves. Today, they wear camouflage uniforms and shoot pepper spray.*

Beginning Paragraph

In the beginning paragraph below, the writer combines interesting details with a question to introduce the focus statement.

The writer provides interesting background information and asks a question.

The writer includes a focus statement (underlined).

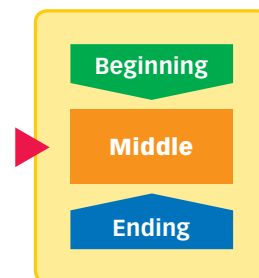
For years, people have found many ways to protect themselves. Today, they wear camouflage uniforms and shoot pepper spray. Where did people get the ideas for these forms of protection? They may have come from the unusual ways animals defend themselves. Animals protect themselves in three amazing ways.



Write an opening. Write two beginning paragraphs, using one or more of the techniques given above. Ask yourself which opening will better capture the reader's attention and which one has a stronger voice.

Writing Developing the Middle Part

After writing your beginning paragraph, you are ready to develop the middle of your essay. Each middle paragraph should focus on one main category of your topic and include the specific details from your organized list (page 170). A well-organized paragraph uses a variety of details.



1. The **topic sentence** introduces the topic of the paragraph. (See the underlined sentence in the paragraph below.)
2. The **specific details** in each paragraph support the topic sentence. Here are several different ways to add details to your writing:
 - Include facts and examples.
 - Explain a term.
 - Make a comparison.
 - Write about a personal experience.
3. The **closing sentence** ends the paragraph and provides a final thought.

Middle Paragraphs

Topic
Sentence

Specific
Details

Closing
Sentence

One common way animals protect themselves is by changing color to blend in with their environment.
A good example of this is the snowshoe rabbit. This rabbit turns from brown in summer to white in winter. Its change in color makes it hard for predators to see the rabbit in dry summer grass and winter snow. Cuttlefish also change color to blend with their surroundings. Without the ability to change color, some species of animals would probably be extinct by now. Humans have borrowed this idea to make camouflage clothing.

Topic
Sentence

Specific
Details

Closing
Sentence

Topic
Sentence

Specific
Details

Closing
Sentence

A more unusual way animals avoid attack is by giving off a chemical that smells bad or clouds the surroundings. *The skunk defends itself by releasing a foul-smelling chemical from glands found beneath its tail. Because the chemical can severely sting eyes, and the smell is enough to send predators hurrying away, any animal that tangles with a skunk surely won't do it twice! An octopus squirts a dark, inky fluid in front of its attackers. The ink clouds the water and lets the octopus escape. Did these protective methods give someone the idea for pepper spray?*

Perhaps the most amazing way animals protect themselves is by releasing a tail or another body part to get away when captured. *When a limb is trapped, these animals simply release it and go. A salamander's tail will fall off to allow escape, and a starfish's detached arm will grow into a new starfish! The gecko, a tropical lizard, can drop its tail, which then keeps moving to distract the attacker. After the animal escapes, the lost body part will grow back. Wouldn't it be amazing if humans possessed the ability to regrow parts?*



Write your middle paragraphs. Use your organized list (page 170) to help you write your middle paragraphs. Also consider the drafting tips listed below.

Drafting Tips

Here are some tips for writing your middle paragraphs.

- **Keep your purpose and audience in mind.**
- **Follow your plan or outline.**
- **Add new details if they fit the topic sentence.**

Writing Ending Your Essay

In your ending paragraph, you need to restate your focus and make a final statement. Below are two different ending paragraphs for the essay on animal defenses.

Ending Paragraphs

Beginning

Middle

Ending

The writer asks the reader to think about the topic and then offers a final thought.

Imagine that an individual's skin turned color when he or she went from a red carpet to green grass. What if someone simply dropped a leg if he or she got hurt in an accident, only to have a new leg grow back? Some ways animals use to protect themselves may seem like science fiction. However, without their amazing defenses, some animals would not survive.

Your final paragraph could also

- summarize all your main points, and
- emphasize the special importance of the overall topic.

The writer suggests the importance of the essay and its information.

Nature has provided animals with many different ways to protect themselves. They blend in with their surroundings, give off bad-tasting or bad-smelling chemicals, or even drop a captured limb. Over the years, humans have observed and copied many of these defenses. Human beings may be more intelligent, but they can still learn a lot from animals.



Write your ending paragraph. Write a final paragraph for your essay using the suggestions above.

Write your complete first draft. Bring all the parts of your first draft together to form a complete essay.



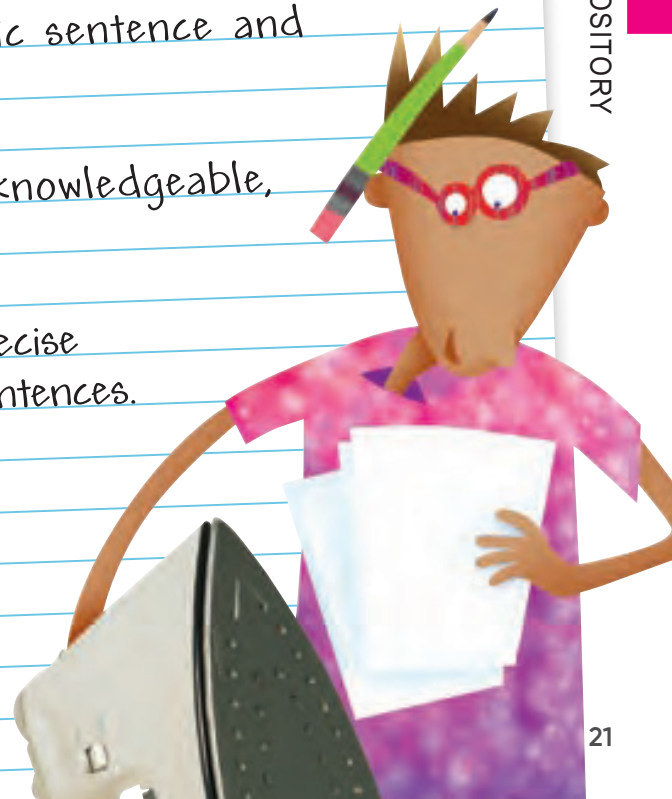
Revising



A first draft never turns out quite right. One part may need more details. Another part may not be clear enough. Another part may be too dull. To fix or improve these parts, you need to carefully revise your first draft.

Keys to Effective Revising

1. Read through your entire draft to get a feeling for how well your essay works.
2. Make sure your focus statement states your topic clearly.
3. Check your paragraphs to make sure the details relate to the topic sentence and are in logical order.
4. Be sure you've used a knowledgeable, interested voice.
5. Check your writing for precise words and a variety of sentences.
6. Use the editing and proofreading marks inside the back cover of this book.



Revising for Ideas

6 My essay presents a variety of fascinating and surprising details for each category.



5 My essay presents different kinds of interesting details.



4 My essay has different kinds of details, but they are all basic details.



As you revise for *ideas*, check to see if you used different kinds of details. In a classification essay, you should also be offering information that is new and interesting to your reader. Use the above rubric strip to help you check your ideas.

How can I use different kinds of details?

You can use details to define, explain, or compare ideas in your essay.

■ **Definitions** usually answer the question “What is it?”

Octopus ink makes it hard for predators—**the animals attacking the octopus**—to see where the octopus is going.

■ **Explanations** answer the question “What does it do?” or “Why or how does it do it?”

An octopus squirts ink **to cloud the water and let the octopus escape**.

■ **Comparisons** answer the question “What is it like?”

The ink the octopus squirts is **like the dust that hides a car on a dirt road**.



Below are six sentences from a classification essay on types of clocks. For each, tell whether the detail used is an explanation, a definition, or a comparison. Use the above questions to help you.

1. Ancient people often used the sun to tell time with an obelisk, a tall, tapered structure with a pyramid-like top.
2. Like obelisks, sundials also use the sun to tell time.
3. Modern watches are more accurate than nature’s clocks.
4. Quartz crystals keep accurate time by using an electric field.
5. Quartz watches use an LCD, or liquid crystal display, to show time.
6. Atomic clocks are accurate to one-millionth of a second per year.



Review your writing. Look for ideas that may need more explanation and for terms that need defining. Also consider making a comparison if it would make your ideas clearer.

3 I need to use a variety of details to add interest.

2 I need to gather more details.

1 I need to understand the different kinds of details.

How can I go beyond basic details?

You know you have gone beyond basic details if a reader says, “Wow, I didn’t know that!” For example, most people are familiar with the way a hedgehog rolls up into a ball to protect itself. But many people would not know that when it curls up, the animal also crawls into a protective bag created by its own skin! That’s a detail that goes beyond “basic.”

■ Basic detail

A frog can use its eyeballs for more than just seeing.

■ Surprising detail

A frog’s eyeballs can drop down against the roof of its mouth to help push food down its throat.



Read the following paragraph. Then write down two details that are surprising or especially interesting. Explain why you chose them.

- 1 Whales breathe through blowholes, exhaling air at over 300
- 2 mph. These watery explosions don’t happen that often because
- 3 whales can hold their breath for as long as 90 minutes. Then they
- 4 must actually remember to breathe. When whales sleep, they float
- 5 near the surface with half of their brain awake. It’s that half that
- 6 reminds the whales to breathe.



Check your writing. Read through your essay to check for surprising details. If necessary, add some details that go beyond basic information.

Ideas

A surprising detail is added.

which then keeps moving to distract the attacker
The gecko, a tropical lizard, can drop its tail. After
the animal escapes, the lost body part . . .

Revising for Organization

6 My details are connected and follow a precise pattern, making my essay clear and engaging.



5 My details are clearly connected with key words and transitions. I follow a precise pattern.



4 My details are connected, but the pattern isn't clear.



When you revise for *organization*, you need to check your details carefully. In a classification essay, the details should be clearly connected. They should also be arranged in the same pattern in each middle paragraph. The above rubric strip will help you check your essay for organization. (For additional information on organization, see pages 550–551.)

Are my details clearly connected?

Your details are clearly connected when they build from one idea to the next. Here is a strategy to help you tie your ideas together.

■ Repeating a key word.

The hermit crab's shell does not cover its soft **abdomen**. To protect its **abdomen**, the crab backs into an abandoned shell and adopts it as its own. (The key word *abdomen* connects the details.)



Read the following paragraph and then list four key words that help to connect the sentences.

- 1 **Seals, sea lions, and walruses are members of the same**
- 2 **family, but each has its unique characteristics. The walrus, for**
- 3 **example, has unique tusks that make it easy to pick out in a crowd.**
- 4 **The tusks are actually huge canine teeth that the walrus uses to**
- 5 **establish dominance and secure the best basking spots. To get to**
- 6 **these prime spots, the walrus uses its tusks to help pull itself onto**
- 7 **rocky or icy shores. Once on shore, the walrus is able to keep other**
- 8 **sea-going mammals away by simply displaying its super-sized teeth.**



Check your details. Read through your essay to check for clearly connected details. If you need to, add key words or transitions to create a link between your ideas.

3 I connect some details, but I do not use a pattern.

2 Most of my details are not connected. I do not use a pattern.

1 I need to completely reorganize my paragraphs.

Do I follow a precise pattern in my essay?

You have followed a precise pattern if each main category is covered in the same way, with about the same number and types of details. You can establish this pattern in your organized list or outline. (See page 170.)



Read the following paragraph. Then number your paper from 1 to 4 and arrange the four sentences below so they follow the same pattern used in the paragraph.

The folk guitar neck is designed for playing popular music. The neck is tightly glued or bolted to the body to hold up to the tension of the steel strings. The strings are close together on the slender neck, making it easier to use a pick. Because the neck joins the body at the 14th fret, the musician can reach very high notes.

1. Because nylon strings cause less pressure, the wide neck can be carved together with the body.
2. The neck joins the body at the 12th fret to keep the tones low.
3. If you enjoy playing “art” music, the classical guitar is for you.
4. The wide neck keeps the strings spaced for easy finger picking.



Check for paragraph pattern. Review each middle paragraph of your essay to see if you have followed the same pattern for each category.

Organization

A sentence is moved for a more precise pattern.

A good example of this is the snowshoe rabbit. Its change in color makes it hard for predators to see the rabbit in dry summer grass and winter snow. This rabbit turns from brown in summer to white in winter.

Revising for Voice

6 My voice makes my reader feel I am speaking directly to him or her.



5 My voice is appropriate for my purpose and connects with my audience.



4 My voice is acceptable for my purpose, but it does not always connect with my audience.



When revising for *voice* in a classification essay, you must be certain that your voice fits your purpose and reaches the audience. The above rubric strip can guide you in your revising.

How can I tell if my voice fits my purpose?

You can tell if your voice fits your purpose in a classification essay if your writing presents interesting information without sounding too informal.



Below are four passages from classification essays. Decide which of the passages present the facts in a clear and interesting way without sounding too personal or informal.

1

The saguaro cactus survives in the desert by storing water in its stem. The stem tissue can swell up to three times its size as it absorbs the rain.

2

Pitcher plants are really cute. Their leaves are kind of like water pitchers filled with a gross nectar that attracts insects. The bugs then slip on the slimy sides, plop into the liquid, and become plant food.

3

I was bowled over when I learned that the giant redwood tree actually needs a forest fire to reproduce! It's true—the heat of the fire forces the pine cones to open and drop their seeds. Cool!

4

Prairie grasses have adapted to the many fires common to their habitat. The growing structure of the plant is actually located under the ground. This way, when the top of the plant is burned away, new growth can spring up within a few days.



Check your voice. Answer the following questions. If your voice is not quite right for the purpose of your essay, change some words or sentences.

1

Do I state the facts in a clear and interesting way?

2

Do I avoid words that sound too informal or personal?

3 I need to use a more formal voice when connecting with my audience.

2 I need to use a voice throughout my essay and connect to my audience.

1 I need to learn about voice.

Does my voice connect with my audience?

Your voice will connect with your audience if your essay is informational and engaging. You can make this connection with your audience in several ways.

- **Use specific examples.** Specific examples can make your thoughts clearer and more interesting to the reader.

Giant redwood trees can have bark two feet thick. The bark helps the trees survive droughts, insect attacks, and even forest fires.

- **Share an anecdote.** A brief anecdote or story can make your information easier to understand.

People who are sprayed by a skunk try everything from bathing in tomato juice to covering themselves in baking soda.

- **Relate your topic to the reader.** Allow your audience to see how the topic affects their lives.

If prairie grasses hadn't adapted to survive fires, the prairies would have eventually dried up and blown away. The loss of prairies would have changed the ecology of the entire country.



Check reader reaction. Ask a classmate to read your essay and suggest ways you could create a stronger connection. Use the strategies above as you revise.

Voice

A sentence has been added to connect the topic with the reader's life.

After the animal escapes, the lost body part will
grow back. *Wouldn't it be amazing if humans possessed the ability to regrow parts?*

Imagine that an individual's skin turned color when he or she went from a red carpet to green grass. . . .

Revising for Word Choice

6 Precise words and modifiers make my essay informative and enjoyable to read.

5 Precise words and modifiers make my essay informative.

4 Most of my words are precise; however, I need to check for unnecessary modifiers.

Use precise words and phrases to give your writing clarity. Also avoid the trap of overusing modifiers. The above rubric can help you check for *word choice*.

How can I find precise words?

One way to find just the right word for your essay is to use a thesaurus. A thesaurus is a book that lists synonyms and antonyms. If your thesaurus is arranged alphabetically, look up your word as you would in a dictionary. If you are using a traditional thesaurus, look up your word in the index.

Part of speech

Entry word

Synonyms, explanations, and examples

run verb—when used as a verb, the word run might suggest:

(1) *to move quickly*. sprint, scuttle, scamper, dart, dash, rush, hurry (2) *to flow*. stream, trickle, pour out, course, gush, spill, flood (3) *to proceed*. happen, go, progress, move along, pass, move forward, go by, pass by (4) *to manage*. administer, govern, lead, control, be in charge, handle, manipulate, direct, rule, organize (5) *to function*. operate, process

Not every synonym for a word has the same meaning. Note how the above thesaurus entry is numbered to show the different meanings of the word. When you use a synonym, be sure it fits your meaning.



Using the thesaurus entry above, find two synonyms to replace the word “run” in each of the following sentences. Make certain your choice fits the meaning of each sentence.

1. Once the skunk has stopped the attack, it can run to safety.
2. Li was selected to run the school garage sale.
3. Whenever it rains, the water runs over the dam.



Check your essay for precise word choice. Go through your essay and circle two or three plain words. Use a thesaurus to replace them with more interesting words. Be sure each new word has the precise meaning you need.

3 Some of my words are not precise or necessary.

2 My words are not precise, and I need to delete unnecessary modifiers.

1 I need help finding precise words and identifying unnecessary modifiers.

Have I used any unnecessary modifiers?

You can check your writing for wordiness by being sure to avoid the problems shown below.

- **Unnecessary Modifiers** (Delete “kind of,” “sort of,” and “really.”)

It's **sort of** important to **really** keep these fish well fed.

Better: It's important to keep these fish well fed.

- **Strings of Adjectives** (Select the best one or two.)

The **tiny, cute red** sea horse was fun to watch.

Better: The tiny red sea horse was fun to watch.

- **Unnecessary Adjectives** (Don't restate the obvious.)

The penguins waddled across the **cold, frozen** ice.

Better: The penguins waddled across the ice.



Rewrite each sentence to eliminate wordiness.

1. The hippopotamus can kind of walk on the bottom of the river.
2. The giraffe's horns are really hard, bony, hairy knobs.
3. A giraffe has the same number of neck bones as a small, little child has.



Check for wordiness. Circle unnecessary modifiers in your essay and rewrite any sentences that seem wordy.

Word Choice

Precise words are used, and unnecessary modifiers are cut.

camouflage uniforms
Today, they wear ~~kind of different-colored outfits~~ and
pepper spray.
shoot ~~sort of different stuff from cans~~ Where did
people get the ideas for these forms of protection?

Revising for Sentence Fluency

6 My sentences are skillfully written and easy to follow.



5 Most of my sentences flow because I have used subordinating conjunctions and avoided rambling sentences.



4 Most of my sentences are well written, but I could combine some.



When you revise for *sentence fluency*, you should consider combining short sentences by using dependent clauses. At the same time, you should watch out for long, rambling sentences that have too many conjunctions. Your goal is to write smooth sentences of varying types and lengths.

How can I combine sentences using subordinating conjunctions?

You can combine two closely related sentences into one complex sentence by using a subordinating conjunction. (See pages **517** and **744**.)

Cats get frightened by loud noises. They arch their backs and hiss.

By adding the subordinating conjunction “when,” you create a subordinate clause and turn the two short sentences into one complex sentence.

When cats get frightened by loud noises, they arch their backs and hiss.

(or) **Cats arch their backs and hiss when they get frightened by loud noises.**



When the dependent clause begins a sentence, it is followed by a comma. Usually, when the dependent clause comes at the end of a sentence, no comma is used.



Combine the following sentence pairs by using the subordinating conjunction given in parentheses.

1. Porcupine fish are usually left alone by predators. Their bodies are covered with sharp spines. (*because*)
2. Puffer fish gulp water to expand their size. Larger fish can't get puffer fish into their mouths. (*when*)
3. The red panda has an extra thumb like the giant panda. It is more closely related to the raccoon. (*although*)



Combine short sentences. Underline any closely related sentences in your essay. Try to combine some of them using subordinating conjunctions.

3 Most of my sentences do not flow. I need to combine some closely related sentences and fix a few rambling sentences.

2 Many of my sentences are choppy or rambling. I need to fix them.

1 I need to learn about subordinating conjunctions and rambling sentences.

How can I fix rambling sentences?

You can start fixing a rambling sentence by removing some of the *and*'s and replacing them with periods. Capitalize words as needed. (See page 505.) After you break up a rambling sentence, you may also improve the flow of the writing by using a subordinating conjunction or another sentence-combining method.



On your own paper, correct the rambling sentence below by cutting some of the *and*'s and adding periods. Then try to combine a couple related sentences.

Small animals need the most protection and they might use chemicals to keep themselves safe and these chemicals often cause pain to attacking animals and this pain teaches attackers to leave the small animals alone.



Check for rambling sentences. Review your essay for sentences that go on and on. Make whatever corrections are needed.

Sentence Fluency

A rambling sentence is made into two sentences. The second sentence begins with a subordinating conjunction.

The skunk defends itself by releasing a foul-smelling chemical from glands found beneath its tail and
Because *the chemical can severely sting eyes, and the smell*
is enough to send predators hurrying away, so any
animal that tangles with a skunk surely won't do it
twice! An octopus squirts a dark, inky fluid in . . .

Revising Using a Checklist



Check your revising. On a piece of paper, write the numbers 1 to 15. If you can answer “yes” to a question, put a check mark after that number. If not, continue to revise that part of your essay.

Ideas

- _____ 1. Do I cover at least three specific categories of my topic?
- _____ 2. Do I have a clear focus statement?
- _____ 3. Do I include different kinds of interesting details?

Organization

- _____ 4. Does my beginning grab the reader’s attention?
- _____ 5. Do the details in each paragraph support the topic sentence?
- _____ 6. Are my ideas and details clearly connected?
- _____ 7. Do I follow a precise pattern?
- _____ 8. Does the ending paragraph restate my focus and make a final statement?

Voice

- _____ 9. Does my voice fit my purpose?
- _____ 10. Have I used different ways to connect with my audience?

Word Choice

- _____ 11. Do I know how to use a thesaurus?
- _____ 12. Do I use precise words?
- _____ 13. Have I deleted unnecessary modifiers?

Sentence Fluency

- _____ 14. Have I combined closely related sentences?
- _____ 15. Is my writing free of rambling sentences?

