

Introduction and Pretest

Your students should be familiar with the proofreading and technology skills in the advanced level of the Writer's Guide before beginning this unit.

PREPARATION The pretest in this introduction to the unit should be used to determine if your students are working at the advanced level of practical writing. It should be administered and scored before the students are introduced to the content of the unit.

Each student will need lined paper and a folder to use as a writing portfolio in which to keep writing assignments.

Introduction

Introduce the students to the unit with an explanation like the following: *We're going to have fun learning to be authors who can write many different kinds of things. Sometimes authors work with others to produce a piece of writing. Authors who write together work in a cooperative group to produce a piece of writing. They enjoy sharing ideas. Sometimes we'll work cooperatively to write letters and directions. When we write letters and directions, I'll write our ideas and our letter or directions on a chart for the whole class. Everyone will contribute ideas to our class letter and directions.*

Sometimes authors work alone. After we practice together, you'll produce a piece of writing of your own.

For the next few lessons, you'll be learning about practical writing. Friendly letters, letters of complaint, and directions are all examples of practical writing.

Beginning Writing Sample

PREPARATION Write the following starter on the board: *The school board is planning to take away ten minutes of your lunchtime for you to write in your homework planners. Write to the school board to explain how you feel about losing ten minutes of your lunchtime, and suggest another solution.*

Explain to the students that before they learn about writing a letter of complaint, you would like to have a sample of their writing. Tell them you'll save this sample so that you and they can see how their writing improves as they learn more about practical writing. Remind them that when they write a letter of complaint, they should tell the person they're writing why they're dissatisfied with a service, a decision, or a product.

Read the starter on the board to the students. Ask them to write a letter of complaint on lined paper. Allow the students time to write. Ask them to edit, proofread, and write a final copy of the letter. Evaluate the students' writing using the rubric on the following page. Keep the writing sample and the scoring rubric for comparison at the end of the unit.

RUBRIC**Pretest****Posttest****Scoring the Samples**

Give the student a score of 0 if there is no evidence of the element.

Give the student a score of 1 for each element at the emergent or minimum level.

Give the student a score of 3 for each element at a satisfactory level.

Give the student a score of 5 for each element at the mastery level.

Evaluating the Elements of a Piece of Practical Writing		
	The author of this letter of complaint . . .	Points Earned
O R G A N I Z A T I O N	Includes the writer's complete address and date.	
	Includes a complete inside address.	
	Uses an appropriate salutation.	
	Uses an appropriate closing.	
	Concludes the letter of complaint with his or her signature.	
C O N T E N T	Writes a <i>Re:</i> line above the salutation.	
	Opens with a clear and concise statement of the complaint.	
	Presents logical and well-supported reasons, facts, and examples.	
	States action(s) that will satisfy the writer.	
	States how the writer may be reached.	
S T Y L E	Uses language that compels the reader to act.	
	Uses formal language.	
	Uses precise vocabulary.	
	Establishes a clear focus with little or no irrelevant or repetitious information.	
	Writes a <i>cc:</i> line below the signature.	
M E C H A N I C S	Uses correct format according to instructions.	
	Uses correct punctuation.	
	Uses correct capitalization.	
	Uses conventional spelling at a developmentally appropriate level.	
	Uses standard English.	
Total Points		

If the student scores . . .	
85–100 points	The student has mastered the skills and concepts taught in the advanced level of Practical Writing.
20–84 points	The student is properly placed in the advanced level of Practical Writing.
0–19 points	Administer the pretest for the intermediate level of Practical Writing.