

Introduction and Pretest

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

PREPARATION This pretest to determine if your students are working at the beginning level of Practical Writing 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 things. Sometimes authors work with other authors to produce one piece of writing. Authors who write together work in a cooperative group. A group of people who work together to produce a piece of writing is called a cooperative writing group. The authors enjoy sharing ideas. Sometimes we'll work cooperatively to write invitations, thank-you letters, and friendly letters. When we write class letters, I'll write our ideas and our letter on chart paper. Everyone will contribute ideas to our class letter.*

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. Lists, messages, invitations, thank-you letters, and friendly letters are all examples of practical writing.

Beginning Writing Sample

PREPARATION Write the following starter on the board: *Imagine you're writing to a friend you haven't seen for a while. Tell your friend about the interesting things you've been doing this week.*

Explain to the students that before they learn about writing a friendly letter, you'd like a sample of their writing. Tell them you'll save this sample so you and they can see how their writing improves as they learn more about practical writing. Remind them that when they write a friendly letter, they'll tell the person to whom they're writing some interesting things about what's been happening.

Read aloud the starter on the board. Ask the students to write a friendly letter 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.

Name _____ Date _____

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 friendly letter . . .	Points Earned
O R G A N I Z A T I O N	Includes the writer's complete address and the date.	
	Uses an appropriate greeting.	
	Uses an appropriate closing.	
	Concludes the friendly letter with a signature.	
	Places letter elements correctly on the page.	
C O N T E N T	Begins the letter with a friendly question.	
	Shares personal information.	
	Shares recent experiences or activities.	
	Asks questions that will generate responses from the reader.	
	Ends the letter with a closing statement that anticipates a response.	
S T Y L E	Uses a variety of sentence beginnings.	
	Uses adjectives that tell what kind, which one, and how many.	
	Uses adverbs that tell how, when, and where.	
	Uses both declarative and interrogative sentences.	
	Shows his or her personal voice.	
M E C H A N I C S	Uses conventional spelling at a developmentally appropriate level.	
	Capitalizes <i>I</i> , first and last names, and the first word of sentences.	
	Uses appropriate end punctuation.	
	Uses commas correctly in the elements of the letter (date, city and state, greeting, closing).	
	Correctly uses common verbs.	
Total Points		

If the student scores . . .	
85–100 points	Administer the pretest for the intermediate level of Practical Writing.
20–84 points	The student is properly placed in the beginning level of Practical Writing.
0–19 points	Administer the placement test for <i>Language for Learning</i> , an SRA program, or place the student in a lower-level language program.