

THE WRITING ACADEMY®, LLC

THE
ATHLETIC
WRITER



THE FOUR VOICES

*Building Endurance and Thinking
for the Writing Process*

● Coach ● Cheerleader ● Referee ● Fans

TRAIN THE WRITER WITHIN

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The Writing Academy®, LLC

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The Athletic Writer

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Abstract & Rationale

Writing is a cognitive performance. This book trains it — and gives students a language for the invisible work.

When people watch a skilled athlete, they see the finished movement — the accurate pass, the strong finish, the controlled landing. They do not see the drills, corrections, repetitions, setbacks, and moments of recovery that made the performance possible. Writing is misunderstood in the same way. Adults see the final composition, but students *experience* the invisible work: generating ideas, holding language in working memory, choosing words, organizing thoughts, monitoring conventions, and persisting when the page refuses to cooperate.

The Athletic Writer treats writing as cognitive performance. It gives teachers a way to train the writing brain intentionally, and it gives students a language for what is happening inside their minds. Four internal voices carry that language throughout the book:

Coach — strategy

Cheerleader — endurance

Referee — rules

Fans — audience

Together, the four voices help students move from dependence on teacher prompts toward independent self-coaching — the moment a teacher's most powerful questions become the student's own inner language.

IN BRIEF

The Athletic Writer is a professional-development and classroom resource that makes the writing process visible, memorable, and actionable. It trains endurance and thinking across the Grade 3–5 writing standards, using the four voices, the RPLD thinking levels, and genre frameworks (TREES, TRAILS, and CREATURES) so every writer can learn to coach themselves.

Purpose & Vision

Why we teach students to hear the voices in their own heads.

PURPOSE

To make the invisible work of writing visible and trainable — so that every student develops the **endurance** to sustain a demanding task and the **thinking** to make deliberate choices, and can eventually coach themselves through the entire writing process without waiting for the teacher.

We all have internal voices speaking to us at almost every moment — steering our choices, our effort, and our doubts. The most successful people learn to recognize those voices and put them to work. Young writers can learn this too. When a task takes real endurance, like writing, a student who can name the voice they need is far better equipped to keep going, make a plan, check their work, and remember their reader.

THE BIGGER REASON

Helping students recognize their internal voices is one powerful way to provide equal access. When students understand their own thinking — and why they think what they think — every child gains access to the strategies strong writers use silently. Educationally, this is called metacognition.

This is the heart of the book. The four voices are not decoration; they are a way to hand every student, regardless of background or starting point, the same inner toolkit that fluent writers use automatically. Naming the thinking is the first step to owning it.

How to Use This Book

Read it once, then keep it beside you as a training manual.

How to Use This Book

Read the book once to meet the four voices and the way the writing brain works. After that, use it as a reference and a training manual. Each chapter follows the same rhythm so it is easy to navigate: a **Big Idea** in big print, a **Training Target** that connects the chapter to the Grade 3, 4, and 5 standards (color-coded by grade) and the ELPS, the relevant **voices**, the **thinking levels** where they fit, and a **teacher script** written in the exact words a teacher can say. The four voices are the throughline; return to them in every lesson.

When to Use This Book

Use it any time students are writing. In a mini-lesson, name the voice the day's skill belongs to. During drafting, call on the Cheerleader to protect endurance. In revision, let the Coach and the Fans lead. In editing, invite the Referee. In a conference, ask which voice the writer needs next. Whenever a writer stalls, the fastest help is often not a new assignment but the right voice at the right moment. The book spans Grades 3–5, so a campus can share one language vertically as students grow.

THE CHAPTER RHYTHM, EVERY TIME

Big Idea → Training Target (Grades 3 · 4 · 5 + ELPS) → The Voices → Thinking Levels → Teacher Script → Training Routine → Locker Room Reflection.

The Benefits

What the four voices give the people on both sides of the desk.

Benefits for Teachers

- ▶ One shared language for writing that works across Grades 3, 4, and 5.
- ▶ Every move scripted — the exact words to say, with directions kept separate.
- ▶ Standards mapped for you, color-coded by grade, with the coordinating ELPS.
- ▶ A fast way to diagnose what a writer needs: name the voice, not just "add more."
- ▶ Thinking levels built in, so you can aim instruction at the next step.
- ▶ Less reteaching of whole assignments; more precise, one-move coaching.

Benefits for Students

- ▶ A name for the invisible work — so writing feels doable, not mysterious.
- ▶ Endurance and courage to keep going when the page is hard.
- ▶ Independence: the voices become the student's own inner coaching.
- ▶ Metacognition — understanding their own thinking, and equal access to it.
- ▶ Audience awareness that turns writing into real communication.
- ▶ Confidence that grows with every honest attempt, not just every finished piece.

THE PROMISE

A student who can hear the Coach, the Cheerleader, the Referee, and the Fans has a whole team in their head — and never has to face the blank page alone.

PART ONE

1

Becoming an Athletic Writer

1 · The Athletic Writer • 2 · The Writing Brain

3 · The Four Voices • 4 · Writing Endurance

5 · The Writing Locker Room • 6 · Writing Injury Recovery

The Athletic Writer

Why writing is cognitive training, not a one-time performance.

BIG IDEA

Strong writers are not born finished. They are trained one decision, one draft, and one recovery at a time.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

Supports the recursive writing process in **3.11** — establishing the purpose, audience, genre, development, revision, editing, and publishing behaviors used across **3.11** and **3.12**.

GRADE 4

Carries the same recursive process into **4.11** and **4.12**, with students sustaining more of the plan-develop-revise-edit-publish cycle independently.

GRADE 5

Applies across **5.11** and **5.12** as writers self-regulate the full process and recover from fatigue without prompting.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — writing with newly acquired vocabulary and narrating, describing, and explaining with increasing specificity, as students gain a repeatable language for each part of the process.

When a crowd watches an athlete perform, it sees the result of training — the completed pass, the powerful finish, the controlled landing, the final score. The crowd does not see every failed attempt, correction, repetition, and moment when the athlete wanted to stop. Writing is often judged in the same incomplete way. Adults see the finished paper, but the child experiences the invisible work: finding an idea, holding it in mind, turning it into language, recording it, checking it, and continuing when the writing becomes difficult.

The Athletic Writer framework treats each of those moves as trainable. Just as an athlete repeats a skill until it becomes automatic, a writer rehearses stating a thesis, developing elaboration, combining sentences, and restarting after fatigue — one deliberate rep at a time.

Writing Endurance Is More Than Writing Longer

Writing endurance is the ability to keep making purposeful decisions as the task grows demanding. A student may fill a page and still show weak endurance if the ideas drift, the details disappear, or the final sentences are rushed. Another student may write fewer words but show strong endurance — planning carefully, revising a confusing section, checking evidence, and finishing with a deliberate conclusion. **Endurance is sustained thinking, not simply sustained pencil movement.**

The Athletic Writer learns to notice fatigue without surrendering to it. The writer can pause, breathe, reread the prompt, return to the plan, or ask which voice is needed. These recovery behaviors become part of performance rather than evidence of failure.

Standards Become Training Targets

The standards describe what students are expected to do — plan for genre, topic, purpose, and audience; develop focused and coherent ideas; revise; edit; and publish. The Athletic Writer turns each expectation into a *training target*: a specific, coachable behavior with a voice attached, so a broad standard becomes today's concrete rep.

Try It With Students — From Assignment to Training Target

A teacher asks students to explain why teamwork matters.

BEFORE TRAINING

"Write a paragraph about teamwork. Use good details and correct grammar."

AFTER TRAINING (ATHLETIC WRITER)

"Write a focused paragraph explaining why teamwork matters."

COACH state one clear reason and develop it with an example • **CHEERLEADER** keep writing when the idea feels unfinished • **REFEREE** check complete sentences and agreement • **FANS** make the reason easy for a classmate to understand.

Where the thinking levels fit: a writer who can only follow the target with heavy prompting is working at **Foundational**; one who selects and sustains the right behaviors independently, and adjusts after fatigue, is writing at **Independent** or **Reflective**.

Teacher Script — Naming the Training

SAY

"Today we are not just finishing a paragraph. We are training four writing behaviors — the same way an athlete trains."

SAY

"Watch me write one sentence. As I do, I'll tell you which voice helped me — my Coach, my Cheerleader, my Referee, or my Fans."

► *Model a single sentence aloud and name the voice that produced it. Then ask students to name the voice they need before they ask you for help. Celebrate the use of a strategy, not only the quality of the final product.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Locker Room Reflection

- Which parts of writing do my students currently treat as mysterious or purely talent-based?
- Which external teacher prompt should become an internal student voice?
- How can I describe tomorrow's writing lesson as one specific training target?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Do not introduce all four voices as four more rules to memorize. Introduce them as helpers. Begin with the Coach and Cheerleader during drafting, bring in the Referee after ideas are developed, and call on the Fans whenever students need to consider clarity, interest, or audience.

FINISH STRONG

The Athletic Writer is not the student who produces a perfect first draft. The Athletic Writer is the student who knows how to begin, continue, adjust, recover, and finish with purpose.

The Writing Brain

What happens inside the mind during composition.

BIG IDEA

Writing is one of the brain's most demanding coordination events — ideas, language, memory, movement, and self-monitoring must all work together.

☉ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

Supports the recursive process in **3.11** by explaining why writers move among planning, drafting, revising, and editing — and supports legibility and conventions by distinguishing idea generation from transcription and monitoring.

GRADE 4

Deepens coordination for **4.11** as longer, more developed pieces place greater load on planning and working memory.

GRADE 5

Applies to **5.11** as writers manage sustained composition and self-monitor across a full piece with growing automaticity.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(F) — writing with newly acquired vocabulary and writing using a variety of sentence structures with increasing accuracy, as external supports free working memory for meaning.

A student may know exactly what happened in a story and still struggle to write an explanation. Another may speak in rich detail but produce only two short sentences. These gaps do not mean the student has nothing to say — they reveal the complexity of the writing brain. Thinking an idea, organizing it, turning it into language, holding it long enough to write it, spelling the words, and monitoring the result are separate processes that must run together.

The jobs the writing brain juggles at once: generate the idea • organize it • translate it into language • hold it in working memory • transcribe it (handwriting/spelling) • monitor the result. When one job demands too much, another falls off the page.

Reduce the Overload – One Job Visible at a Time

Teachers can reduce overload by making one job more visible at a time. Oral rehearsal can hold an idea before transcription. A planning map can protect organization. Sentence stems can support translation without supplying the whole thought. A temporary spelling placeholder can keep the draft moving. A separate editing pass keeps the Referee from stopping the Coach after every word.

Working Memory – The Writer's Temporary Clipboard

Working memory holds information briefly while the writer uses it. A child may be holding the prompt, the sentence being composed, the spelling of a word, the evidence from the passage, and the next idea all at once. When the clipboard gets crowded, part of the message falls off.

External supports are not shortcuts that weaken thinking — **they release working memory for deeper thinking**. A visible prompt, a TREES organizer, a word bank, a list of transitions, or a quick sketch preserves information so the writer can focus on development and meaning.

Try It With Students – Protecting a Sentence in Working Memory

A student can explain orally why a character is brave but writes only a fragment.

BEFORE TRAINING

"Because she went back."

AFTER TRAINING (IDEA PROTECTED)

"Mia is brave because she returns to the flooded house to rescue the puppy, even though she is afraid."

Where the thinking levels fit: coordinating the writing jobs with heavy teacher support is **Foundational**; a writer who uses a support on their own to protect meaning, then reflects on which support helped, is working toward **Independent** and **Reflective**.

Teacher Script — Catching the Idea Before It Falls

SAY

"Say your whole thought out loud before you write it. I'll help you hold it."

SAY

"Now let's count the big chunks of meaning on our fingers. Write one chunk, then reread the whole sentence."

SAY

"See what we did? We protected your idea while your hand caught up with your brain."

► Repeat the student's sentence back before they write. Let them record one meaning-chunk at a time, then reread the complete sentence. Name the support so the student can reuse it.

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Locker Room Reflection

- Which writing job appears to consume the most attention for my students?
- What information can I place outside working memory without reducing rigor?
- Do I allow students to move recursively, or do I unintentionally require a rigid sequence?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

When a student stalls, do not immediately supply a sentence. First identify the overloaded system. Ask, *"Do you need an idea, an order, a word, help holding the sentence, or help recording it?"* The answer keeps support precise and preserves student ownership.

FINISH STRONG

The writing brain grows stronger when teachers reduce unnecessary overload, strengthen the component skills, and then coach students to coordinate them with increasing independence.

The Four Voices of the Athletic Writer

Teaching students to coach, encourage, monitor, and address an audience.

BIG IDEA

The teacher's most powerful writing prompts should eventually become the student's own inner language.

🕒 TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

Supports the writing process and composition standards **3.11** and **3.12** by giving students inner language for planning, developing, revising, editing, and publishing — especially **3.11(E)**, publishing for an audience, through the Fans voice.

GRADE 4

Extends the same inner language to **4.11** and **4.12**, with the Coach guiding more independent planning and development and the Referee monitoring grade-4 conventions — publishing for audiences at **4.11(E)**.

GRADE 5

Applies across **5.11** and **5.12** as students self-regulate the whole process, using all four voices to plan, sustain, monitor, and publish — audience awareness at **5.11(E)**.

ELPS: supports c.5(B), c.5(E), and c.5(G) — writing using newly acquired vocabulary, employing conventions with increasing accuracy, and narrating/describing/explaining with specificity — as the four voices give multilingual learners named, repeatable moves for each part of the writing process.

Writing may look quiet from the outside, but an effective writer's mind is busy. One part is deciding what to say. Another is checking whether the meaning is clear. Another is fighting the urge to quit. Another is imagining how a reader will respond. The four voices give names to those mental jobs so students can recognize and use them on purpose.

The voices are not characters added for entertainment — they represent real metacognitive functions. The Coach selects strategies. The Cheerleader regulates effort and emotion. The Referee monitors rules and clarity. The Fans represent audience awareness and purpose. When a student can name the voice they need, they begin to regulate their own writing instead of waiting for the teacher.

Meet the Team in the Writer's Head

Each voice is color-coded the same way throughout the book, so students always know who is "talking."

The Coach

STRATEGY & CRAFT

Asks what the writing needs next — plans the genre, purpose, and organization; develops ideas; selects evidence; and chooses craft moves during revision.

The Cheerleader

ENDURANCE & COURAGE

Protects confidence so the writer keeps going: gives permission to draft, to take a risk, to write the rough sentence now and improve it later — and to recover after frustration.

The Referee

RULES & SELF-MONITORING

Checks complete sentences, agreement, tense, spelling, punctuation, and clarity — and knows the timing: Coach first, Referee later, so drafting is never stopped by the whistle.

The Fans

AUDIENCE & IMPACT

Stand in for the reader who needs context, clarity, and closure — and cheer the writer on. The Fans ask, "Why does this matter?" and celebrate every honest attempt.

Where the thinking levels fit: a young writer may start by naming a voice only when the teacher prompts it **Foundational**, and grow toward calling the right voice independently, at the right moment, and explaining why **Reflective**. Naming the voice is the first rep; choosing it without help is the goal.

TEACHER SCRIPT — INTRODUCING THE FOUR VOICES

SAY

"Great writers aren't quiet inside. They have a whole team in their head. Today you're going to meet your team — four voices that help you write."

SAY

"Your Coach helps you plan and make it better. Your Cheerleader keeps you going when it's hard. Your Referee checks the rules. And your Fans remind you someone is going to read this."

► Point to each color as you name the voice. Ask: "Which voice do you think you'll need first today?" Give students 30 seconds to answer a partner.

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Writing Endurance

Why writers get tired — and how stamina grows.

BIG IDEA

Writing endurance is the ability to keep making useful decisions after the first burst of ideas has faded.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

Supports the recursive use of the writing process in **3.11**, and sustained development, revision, editing, and publishing across **3.11(B–E)**.

GRADE 4

Extends stamina to the longer pieces of **4.11(B–E)**, where ideas must be developed and sustained across more of the draft.

GRADE 5

Applies to **5.11(B–E)** as writers sustain focus, recover from fatigue, and finish with deliberate purpose independently.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — sustaining writing with newly acquired vocabulary and explaining with increasing specificity, so multilingual writers build the stamina to reach full, developed responses.

Many students begin a task with energy. They write a title, one opening sentence, maybe a quick detail — and then the movement stops. The blank space feels larger than the idea in the writer's mind. Adults may read this as laziness, but the student is often experiencing cognitive fatigue, uncertainty, or the loss of a clear next move.

Athletes condition for the part of the game that happens *after* natural energy fades. Writers must do the same. The goal is not to hurry students but to help them experience repeated cycles of effort and recovery. Each successful cycle teaches the writer one powerful belief: **"I can restart."**

Progress Markers Make Endurance Possible

Endurance is easier when progress is visible. Students can mark completed sections on a plan, highlight evidence already used, place a check beside each **TREES** component, or track the number of focused minutes. These markers shrink the feeling of endless work and help the writer see the next manageable step. Celebrate process milestones, too: a student who returned to the draft after frustration, expanded an explanation, or completed an editing pass has demonstrated endurance even if the paper is not yet polished.

Pushing vs. Overloading

Productive conditioning asks a student to work *slightly* beyond current comfort while providing strategies and recovery. Overload asks a student to continue without a plan, without support, and without a way to recover — which teaches avoidance, not stamina. The Coach adds the strategy; the Cheerleader protects the recovery.

Where the thinking levels fit: restarting only when the teacher intervenes is **Foundational** endurance; noticing one's own fatigue, choosing a recovery strategy, and finishing with purpose is **Independent** to **Reflective**.

Training Routine — The Effort-and-Recovery Cycle

1

Set a short focus interval with one visible writing goal.

2

Pause for a ten-second reread and name what is finished.

3

Choose the next small writing move from the plan.

4

End with a brief reflection on how you recovered or continued.

Transfer to the WCR: students often lose endurance right after copying evidence. Teach that *evidence is the midpoint, not the finish line*. A written constructed response can be paced as thesis → brief reset → evidence → brief reset → explanation and inference → a final Referee pass.

Teacher Script — Coaching Through Fatigue

SAY (acknowledge, don't excuse)

"Your brain is tired — and the explanation is still needed. Tired is normal; we train right through it."

SAY (the Cheerleader)

"One more meaningful sentence — not one more random sentence."

► Ask the Coach to name one specific next sentence. When the student writes it, celebrate the completed explanation out loud as an endurance rep: "That's a rep. You restarted."

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Locker Room Reflection

- Where in a task do my students most often stop — and is it fatigue, uncertainty, or a lost next move?
- How do I make progress visible so the remaining work feels manageable?
- Do I celebrate recovery and restarts, or only finished, polished pieces?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Track the *quality* of engagement, not just the minutes. A student who writes fewer sentences but plans, rereads, and revises is building more endurance than one who fills a page on autopilot. Name the thinking you see, not just the volume.

FINISH STRONG

A fourth-quarter writer is not someone who never gets tired. It is someone who knows how to reduce the task, choose a strategy, recover focus, and keep building meaning.

The Writing Locker Room

Mindset, emotional readiness, and pre-performance self-talk.

BIG IDEA

Writers often decide whether they can succeed before the pencil ever touches the page.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

Supports all composition standards by developing the self-regulation needed to use the writing process independently, and supports planning in **3.11(A)** through intentional prewriting readiness.

GRADE 4

Builds the confidence and self-regulation that sustain the longer planning and drafting of **4.11(A–B)**.

GRADE 5

Supports the independent self-management of the full process in **5.11**, so writers enter demanding tasks ready rather than anxious.

ELPS: c.1(A) & c.5(B) — using self-regulation and risk-taking to learn, and writing with newly acquired vocabulary, as credible self-talk lowers the affective filter for multilingual writers.

Before athletes compete, they gather in a place where equipment is checked, strategy is reviewed, and emotion is regulated. Writers need a mental locker room too. Students carry histories into every task — past grades, corrections, public comparisons, blank-page fear, and beliefs about whether they are "good writers." Those beliefs shape how long they persist and how willing they are to take risks.

The Writing Locker Room is the short, deliberate routine that helps a writer arrive at the page ready — settled, focused, and armed with one credible next move.

Productive Self-Talk

Self-talk should be honest, specific, and connected to action. "I am the best writer" may feel unbelievable to a discouraged student. **"I can write one clear reason and improve it later"** is credible and useful. The Cheerleader supports the action; the Coach defines it.

LOCKER ROOM PHRASES — STUDENTS REHEARSE THESE

"Start with the plan."

"A rough draft can change."

"Use one strategy before asking for rescue."

"Finish the thinking, then invite the Referee."

"I can build this one part at a time."

A Team Culture for Writing Courage

Writers take greater risks when the classroom treats mistakes as information. Model imperfect sentences and invite students to improve them; thank students for identifying confusion. Keep peer response focused on the needs of the **Fans** — clarity for the reader — rather than personal judgment. A writing team celebrates growth publicly without exposing weakness: share revised sentences, strategy discoveries, and examples of recovery.

Where the thinking levels fit: repeating a self-talk phrase only when led is **Foundational**; choosing credible, action-linked self-talk on one's own before a hard task — and reflecting on what settled the nerves — is **Independent** to **Reflective**.

Teacher Script — Coaching the Self-Talk

SAY

"Before we write, let's coach ourselves. Not 'I'm the best writer' — something true and useful. Try: 'I can write one clear reason and improve it later.'"

SAY

"You've got this" — and here's how: use your plan to choose the first reason."

► *Model an imperfect sentence and invite students to improve it. Thank a student for naming a confusion. Every encouraging phrase should point toward a strategy, never float as a poster.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — The One-Minute Locker Room (before a WCR)

1

Breathe once; release tension in the hands and shoulders.

2

Read the prompt; name the task, topic, genre, purpose, and Fans.

3

Write the first small goal on the plan; select TREES.

4

Choose one Coach statement and one Cheerleader statement.

Locker Room Reflection

- What negative writing-identity statements do I hear most often from students?
- What credible replacement language can I teach and rehearse with them?
- Does my encouragement always point toward a specific strategy or next move?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Don't let motivational language become a poster students no longer hear. Connect every phrase to a behavior: "You have got this" is followed by "Use your map to choose the first reason." Encouragement becomes powerful the moment it points toward a strategy.

FINISH STRONG

The strongest writers walk to the page already believing they can build it — one credible, coachable step at a time.

Writing Injury Recovery

Helping discouraged writers rebuild confidence and participation.

BIG IDEA

Discouraged writers do not need lower expectations. They need safe rehabilitation, precise coaching, and evidence that effort can change performance.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

Supports recursive composition in **3.11** by rebuilding willingness to plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish — and all genre expectations in **3.12** by restoring the confidence to take risks across forms.

GRADE 4

Restores participation in the fuller demands of **4.11** and **4.12**, where avoidance can harden if unaddressed.

GRADE 5

Rebuilds the independent stamina of **5.11** and **5.12** so a recovering writer can re-enter the full process with ownership.

ELPS: c.1(A) & c.1(E) — using self-regulation and internalizing new language by taking risks, as micro-successes lower anxiety and rebuild a willing writer.

Some writers enter the classroom carrying invisible injuries — a paper covered in correction marks, a public comparison, a timed task that ended in tears, or years of hearing that their ideas were too short, too messy, or wrong. The injury may appear as refusal, joking, perfectionism, copied language, or a blank page. These behaviors often protect the student from another painful experience. Athletic rehabilitation does not begin by demanding a full performance; it begins with one safe, successful movement.

Micro-Successes Rebuild Trust

Confidence grows from successful experiences the student can *explain*. A micro-success might be generating three usable details, revising one sentence, completing a paragraph without erasing, or sharing one line with a partner. The teacher names the behavior that caused the success. Avoid false praise — students know when work is incomplete. Say, **"Your explanation is not finished yet, but you returned to the evidence and wrote a clearer sentence. That is recovery."** Honest feedback protects both trust and standards.

Scaffold Without Taking the Pen

Recovery support makes the next move possible without replacing student thinking. Offer a choice of planning tools, allow oral rehearsal, reduce the visible amount of text on the page, or supply a temporary sentence frame — then remove the support gradually. When adults dictate the whole response, the paper improves while the writer stays injured. The objective is not a better product at the expense of independence; it is helping the writer **own** the improvement.

Try It With Students — Making the First Line Possible

A discouraged writer stalls on a prompt about a brave character.

BEFORE

[A blank page after six minutes of erasing.]

AFTER (ONE LINE MADE VISIBLE)

"The character shows courage when she returns to help her brother during the storm."

Where the thinking levels fit: re-entering only with a fully-supplied frame is **Foundational** re-entry; producing a true sentence with a light, fading scaffold — and naming the strategy that helped — moves the writer toward **Independent** ownership.

Teacher Script — Getting Back in the Game

SAY

"Let's uncover just one line. Say me one true sentence that answers the prompt — it doesn't have to be perfect."

SAY

"You entered the game. Now the Coach can help you develop it."

► *Cover most of the page with a blank sheet so only one writing line shows. Record two key words if needed, then return the pen to the student. Celebrate beginning without calling the sentence perfect.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — The Rehabilitation Cycle

1

Identify the specific writing injury or avoidance trigger.

2

Select one safe, achievable performance target.

3

Provide the lightest scaffold that makes independent action possible.

4

Record the successful strategy and reuse it before increasing demand.

Locker Room Reflection

- Which of my students show injury-protecting behaviors — refusal, joking, perfectionism, copying, or the blank page?
- What is the smallest honest success I can help each of them name this week?
- Where might I be improving the paper while leaving the writer dependent?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Do not use public charts that rank students by output; they re-injure the very writers who most need to re-enter. Track private, personal growth instead — this student's own last attempt is the only fair comparison.

FINISH STRONG

A recovering writer does not need us to write the sentence. They need one safe rep, named honestly — proof that effort can change the page.

PART TWO

2

Pregame: Planning the Writing

7 · Choose Your Event

8 · The Pregame Playbook

9 · Know Your Fans

Choose Your Event

Selecting genre, topic, purpose, and audience before drafting.

BIG IDEA

A writer cannot run the correct play until they know which event is being played, why it matters, and who is in the stands.

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GRADE 3

3.11(A)(i) — plan a first draft by selecting a genre for a topic, purpose, and audience; supports **3.12(A–D)** by matching the event to literary, informational, argumentative, or correspondence expectations.

GRADE 4

4.11(A) and **4.12(A–D)** — the same event analysis with more independence and more developed genre craft.

GRADE 5

5.11(A) and **5.12(A–D)** — writers select and justify the event and shape craft for a specific audience and purpose.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(E) — writing in a variety of forms with newly acquired vocabulary and employing genre features, as students learn each event's expectations.

A sprinter, a gymnast, a pitcher, and a swimmer are all athletes, but they do not prepare for the same event. Each event has different equipment, rules, movements, and measures of success. Writing genres work the same way. A personal narrative, a poem, an informational composition, an opinion essay, and a letter are all writing — but each asks the writer for different moves. The pregame question is always: *which event am I running?*

Genre as a Set of Expectations

Genre characteristics are not decorations added after drafting — they are tools that help writing accomplish its purpose. Each event has its own game plan, and each has a framework the writer already knows:

Narrative

THE TRAILS PLAN

Sequence, characters, setting, and meaningful events that lead somewhere.

Informational

THE TREES PLAN

A clear central idea, organized facts, and explanation that develops the idea.

Opinion / Argument

THE CREATURES PLAN

A position, reasons, evidence, and persuasive craft aimed at the reader.

Correspondence

A REAL LETTER

A real recipient, a greeting, a clear message, and a closing.

Have students compare genres around the *same* topic. A poem about rain, an informational paragraph about the water cycle, and a letter thanking a meteorologist use different structures because they serve different Fans and purposes.

Audience Changes the Play

Audience awareness begins **before** drafting. The same explanation changes when it is written for a first grader, a principal, or a scientist. The writer decides how much background the Fans already have, what vocabulary fits, and what tone will build connection.

Try It With Students — One Topic, Three Events

Topic: school gardens. **Narrative** (for classmates): tell about the day the class planted its first garden.

Informational (for families): explain how the garden supports learning. **Opinion letter** (to the principal): argue that the school should add a garden. *Same topic — three events, three sets of Fans.*

Teacher Script – Reading the Event

SAY

"Here's our topic. Before we write, let's scout the event. What are three different ways we could write about this — a story, an explanation, an opinion?"

SAY

"Now the most important question: what would the Fans need in each version?"

► *Write one topic in the center of the board and name three possible writing events. List the genre characteristics beside each. Have students choose one event and justify why it fits the purpose and audience.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine – Scout the Prompt

1

Name the genre or response type (the event).

2

State the topic in a short phrase.

3

Identify the purpose and the Fans (the audience).

4

Box the action word in the prompt and choose the matching plan.

Transfer to the WCR: the event is usually a focused, text-based explanation or argument. Students identify the action word in the prompt, the topic, the evidence requirement, and the audience expectation of clear academic reasoning.

Locker Room Reflection

- 🔑 Do my students treat genre as a label, or as a set of purposeful choices?
- 🔑 How often do students identify the audience before drafting?
- 🔑 Which prompt-marking routine will be consistent across our classrooms?

FINISH STRONG

The Athletic Writer does not rush onto the field with the wrong equipment. The writer studies the task, chooses the event, identifies the Fans, and prepares to write with purpose.

The Pregame Playbook

Brainstorming, freewriting, mapping, and selecting useful ideas.

BIG IDEA

Planning does not delay writing. It protects ideas, reduces working-memory overload, and gives the writer a route forward.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(A)(i) — plan a first draft using a range of strategies such as brainstorming, freewriting, and mapping.

GRADE 4

4.11(A) — plan with more independent selection of a strategy that fits the genre and the writer's need.

GRADE 5

5.11(A) — plan efficiently, generating and selecting ideas and sequencing them for purpose and audience.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — using prewriting to organize newly acquired vocabulary and to plan explanations with increasing specificity.

Some students resist planning because they believe real writers simply begin. Others spend so long decorating an organizer that the draft never starts. Effective planning lives between those extremes: quick enough to preserve energy, useful enough to guide decisions. The playbook gives the writer several plays to choose from.

Brainstorm

Produce possibilities — quantity first, judge later.

Freewrite

Unlock language and uncover thinking; then mine it.

Map

Reveal relationships and order with keywords.

List

Capture quick, concrete details fast.

CHAPTER 8 • THE PREGAME PLAYBOOK

After a freewrite, students **mine** it: circle a strong sentence, underline useful evidence, and identify the central idea. The freewrite is raw training footage — not necessarily the final draft.

Mapping: See the Structure

Maps help students see how ideas connect. A **narrative** map shows event sequence and emotional change. An **informational** map places a central idea in the center with categories around it. An **opinion** map shows a claim, reasons, evidence, and explanations. Teach keywords and brief phrases — if the map demands complete polished sentences, it consumes the energy needed for drafting. The plan carries the ideas; it does not become a second full composition.

Selecting and Sequencing

Planning also requires judgment. Not every idea belongs in the piece. Writers select details that are relevant, sufficient, and appropriate for the Fans, then place those ideas in an order that supports the genre and purpose.

Transfer to the WCR: a compact **TREES** plan beats a decorative organizer. Capture the Thesis, Reasons or ways, Evidence, Explanation, and Significant inference in keywords that can be expanded while drafting.

Teacher Script — Modeling the Plan

SAY

"Watch me brainstorm for thirty seconds. Some of these ideas will be great, and some will be weak — that's normal. We generate first, then we choose."

SAY

"Now I'll pick only the ideas that fit my audience and purpose, and drop the rest into a quick claim-reason-evidence map."

► *Think aloud while selecting. Then have students orally rehearse the order of their ideas with a partner before they draft.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — Run the Playbook

1

Choose one planning strategy for the genre and your need.

2

Generate more ideas than the final piece will require.

3

Select only the relevant ideas and evidence.

4

Sequence them and begin drafting while the plan is fresh.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students have more than one planning strategy to choose from, or only one required organizer?
- Are our plans quick keyword tools, or are they quietly becoming a second full draft?
- How do I help students move from plan to draft while the ideas are still fresh?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Teach at least three planning strategies, but do not require the same organizer for every writer and every genre. The best plan is the one that gets *this* writer to the draft fastest with their ideas intact.

FINISH STRONG

The playbook does not write the game for the student. It gives the writer a visible route, protects working memory, and makes the first drafting move possible.

Know Your Fans

Writing with audience and purpose from the first decision to publication.

BIG IDEA

Writing becomes meaningful when students stop writing only for a grade and begin making choices for a reader.

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GRADE 3

3.11(A)(i) plan for a particular purpose and audience; **3.11(E)(i)** publish written work for appropriate audiences; supports genre craft in **3.12(A–D)**.

GRADE 4

4.11(A) and **4.11(E)** — sharper audience analysis and publishing for real readers with growing independence.

GRADE 5

5.11(A) and **5.11(E)** — writers shape voice, detail, and format deliberately for a specific audience and purpose.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — adapting written language and specificity for the audience, a powerful support for multilingual writers learning register and tone.

A stadium changes when the stands are empty. The event may still occur, but its energy and purpose feel different. Writing changes the same way when students believe nobody is truly reading. If the only audience is a teacher searching for errors, students often write to *finish* rather than to *communicate*.

The Fans voice gives the writer a living audience throughout the process. A powerful planning question makes purpose concrete: **"What should your Fans know, feel, understand, or do after reading?"** The answer turns purpose into an observable outcome.

Audience Feedback Without Losing Ownership

Peer response should not become peer rewriting. Fans *describe their experience* — "I understood the first reason, but I became confused when the second example appeared." The Coach then decides how to revise. Teach two clean forms of Fan feedback:

Appreciation

Names a place that worked. *"The opening made me want to keep reading."*

Need

Identifies where the audience needs more information or clarity. *"I needed one more detail to picture this."*

Authentic Publication

Publication does not have to mean a perfect typed paper — it means preparing writing for an appropriate audience. An authentic audience often increases endurance, because the writer can imagine a real person receiving the work.

Real ways to publish: class anthologies · letters to a real recipient · hallway or classroom displays · audio readings · digital posts in a protected class space · informational cards · presentations.

Transfer to the WCR: the primary Fans are readers deciding whether the response answers the prompt with clear reasoning and evidence. Students must not assume the evaluator will infer a missing connection — the explanation has to make the evidence-to-thesis relationship *visible*.

Teacher Script — Same Idea, Different Fans

SAY

"Here are two different audiences. What does each one already know about our topic — and what would they need us to explain?"

SAY

"Let's write our central idea two ways — once for each audience — and notice what changes: the words, the background, the tone, and what we ask the reader to do."

► Have students identify which version better serves each group of Fans, and say *why*. Keep the revising decisions with the writer.

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — Write for the Stands

1

Name the audience and the desired effect on them.

2

List what the Fans know and what they need explained.

3

Draft or revise one section from the audience's point of view.

4

Publish in a form appropriate for the audience and purpose.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students write to finish, or to reach a real reader?
- How often does student writing reach an audience beyond the gradebook?
- Is "audience" a specific, named person in our classroom, or an abstract word on a poster?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Do not let "audience" remain an abstract word on a poster. Use specific people — a first grader, a family member, the principal, a pen pal — so the Fans become real faces the writer is actually trying to reach.

FINISH STRONG

Writers train differently when the stands are full. Knowing the Fans gives purpose to planning, direction to revision, urgency to clarity, and meaning to publication.

PART THREE

3

The Coach: Developing the Draft

10 · The Opening Drive • 11 · Writing Strength Training
12 · DEEP FACTS • 13 · The Final Drive
14 · Focus, Structure, and Coherence

The Opening Drive

Writing introductions that establish direction and invite the reader in.

BIG IDEA

An effective introduction gives the Fans a clear place to begin — and gives the writer a direction to maintain.

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GRADE 3

3.11(B)(i) — develop drafts into a focused, structured, coherent piece by organizing with purposeful structure, including an introduction; supports craft in **3.12**.

GRADE 4

4.11(B) — introductions that set up more developed, multi-paragraph pieces with a clearer controlling idea.

GRADE 5

5.11(B) — openings crafted deliberately for genre and audience, previewing a sustained line of thinking.

ELPS: c.5(E) & c.5(G) — employing genre features and narrating/explaining with specificity from the very first lines.

The opening play does not win the entire game, but it establishes direction. An introduction should do more than occupy the first lines: it helps the reader understand what kind of text has begun, what the topic or situation is, and why the writing deserves attention. Students are sometimes taught a single hook formula and then apply it everywhere — but strong openings are chosen by *function and genre*, not by a universal list of hooks. Use mentor sentences to compare effects and ask what each opening prepares the Fans to expect.

Avoiding the Overgrown Hook

Some writers spend most of their energy trying to create a dramatic hook, then rush the body. The opening should not consume the whole training session. Give students a time boundary and permission to draft a **functional** introduction first, then strengthen it during revision. The Coach asks, "Does this opening lead naturally into the central idea?" If the answer is no, the writer may need to *simplify* rather than decorate.

The Introduction as a Promise

An introduction makes a promise about the direction of the text. If the writer announces two reasons, the body should develop those two reasons. If a narrative opening creates a problem, the story should address that problem. Coherence begins the moment the writer keeps the opening promise.

The Promise Test: read only the introduction, then predict what the rest of the piece will do. When the finished piece delivers exactly that prediction, the opening kept its promise — that is coherence you can hear.

Transfer to the WCR: a WCR introduction is brief. It answers the prompt with a clear thesis or controlling idea rather than spending time on a generic hook. The Coach asks, "Can the evaluator identify my answer in the first one or two sentences?"

Teacher Script — Building a Functional Opening

SAY

"Before we make an opening fancy, let's make it work. What's the issue or topic, what's our position or central idea, and where is this piece headed?"

SAY

"Watch me write one clear opening that states the idea and previews the reasons — function first, decoration later."

► *Model the concise introduction. Then invite students to revise an opening by improving its function before adding any decoration.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — Run the Opening Drive

1

Name the genre and list the jobs the introduction must do.

2

Draft one clear, functional opening.

3

Check that it points toward the central idea or thesis.

4

After drafting the body, revise the opening so it accurately promises the finished piece.

Locker Room Reflection

- 🔑 Do I teach openings by function and genre, or by one universal "hook" formula?
- 🔑 Do my students draft a working opening first, or stall trying to make it perfect?
- 🔑 How do I help students keep the promise their introduction makes?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Teach openings by function and genre, not by a universal list of hooks. When students know the *jobs* an introduction must do for this event, they can invent an opening that fits — instead of forcing every piece through the same formula.

FINISH STRONG

The opening drive is successful when the writer enters the event with control — and the Fans know exactly where the message is headed.

Writing Strength Training

Developing engaging ideas with relevant details.

BIG IDEA

An idea becomes strong when the writer selects relevant details that help the Fans understand, imagine, or believe it.

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GRADE 3

3.11(B)(iii) — develop drafts into a focused, structured, coherent piece by developing an engaging idea with relevant details.

GRADE 4

4.11(B) — sustain development across a longer piece with well-chosen, relevant details and examples.

GRADE 5

5.11(B) — select precise, purposeful detail and evidence and control development across the whole composition.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — using newly acquired vocabulary to add precise, relevant detail and explain with increasing specificity.

A single idea is like an athlete standing at the starting line: full of potential, but it has not yet performed. Young writers often state an idea and assume the work is done — "The character was brave." "Recycling is important." "My trip was fun." These may be true, but they are not developed. Writing strength training teaches students to add *the right kind of weight*: relevant details, examples, and evidence that make the idea real for the Fans.

The Fans voice helps. Ask what a reader would want next — "**How?**" "**Why?**" "**What happened?**" "**Can you give an example?**" The answer is usually the relevant detail.

Detail Ladders — Climb Down Into Specificity

A detail ladder begins with a broad statement and moves downward into specifics. Each rung gives the reader more precise information:

RUNG 1 • BROAD

"The storm was dangerous."

RUNG 2 • MORE SPECIFIC

"Wind pushed tree branches across the road."

RUNG 3 • MOST SPECIFIC

"A branch struck the porch roof while the family moved away from the windows."

Students can practice detail ladders *orally* before applying them to a draft. The goal is not to use every rung, but to select the level of detail that serves the genre and purpose.

Development Across the Whole Piece

Writers often develop the first body section richly and then weaken. Use a **balance check**: place a mark beside each major idea and count the useful details or explanations supporting it. Uneven development becomes visible at a glance — and easy to fix.

Transfer to the WCR: evidence is a relevant detail, but evidence alone does not fully develop the idea. The writer must explain *how* the evidence supports the thesis — and may add a significant inference that reveals a deeper conclusion (this is the THINK move in the TREES plan).

Teacher Script — Testing a Detail for Relevance

SAY

"Let's generate three possible details for this idea. Now we test each one: does it help the Fans understand, picture, or believe the idea?"

SAY

"We'll keep the detail that best shows or explains the idea — and add one sentence that connects it right back to our point."

► *When a student adds an irrelevant detail, don't just say "stay on topic." Place the central idea beside the detail and ask, "What job is this detail doing?" If they can't name the job, revise or remove it.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — Build the Idea

1

State the main idea of the paragraph or section.

2

Ask the Fans what they need to know next.

3

Choose one relevant detail type and add it.

4

Explain how the detail connects back to the main idea.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students confuse "more words" with "more developed"?
- Where in their pieces does development fade — and how would a balance check reveal it?
- Do students explain how a detail supports the idea, or just drop it and move on?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

When students add irrelevant details, put the central idea beside the detail and ask, "What job is this detail doing?" Naming the job keeps development purposeful — and teaches students to audit their own writing.

FINISH STRONG

Strong writing is not inflated. It is developed with relevant, purposeful detail that gives the Fans enough evidence, clarity, and experience to understand the writer's meaning.

DEEP FACTS

A complete elaboration workout for developing ideas.

BIG IDEA

When students know several ways to elaborate, "add more" becomes a strategic choice instead of a vague demand.

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GRADE 3

3.11(B)(iii) develop an engaging idea with relevant details; supports informational **3.12(B)**, opinion **3.12(C)**, and craft across genres.

GRADE 4

4.11(B) / 4.12(B–C) — more independent selection of elaboration moves for developed compositions.

GRADE 5

5.11(B) / 5.12(B–C) — deliberate, purposeful elaboration that deepens explanation and reasoning.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — using content vocabulary to elaborate and explain with increasing precision.

Writers often know a paragraph needs development but not *what kind* of information to add — so "add more details" produces repetition. DEEP FACTS gives the Coach a menu of nine distinct elaboration moves, so elaboration becomes a purposeful decision.

THE DEEP FACTS MENU — NINE WAYS TO ELABORATE

D	Define — clarify a key word or concept the Fans may not know.
E	Example & Explanation — give a concrete instance and explain it.
E	Expert Testimony — bring in a credible voice or source.
P	Process or Procedure — show the steps of how something happens.
F	Facts & Statistics — use accurate, source-based numbers or facts.
A	Analogy — compare to something familiar to make an idea concrete.
C	Compare & Contrast — show how ideas are alike or different.
T	Tipping Point (Cause & Effect) — reveal what caused a change.
S	Story or Anecdote — use a brief story to make meaning stick.

Choosing the Right DEEP FACT – Start With the Fans

If the reader does not understand a word, **define** it. If the idea feels abstract, use an **example or analogy**. If the reader needs proof, use **evidence, facts, or expert** information. If the reader needs to understand change, use **process or cause and effect**. Have students annotate a draft with the question the Fans are asking, then place the matching DEEP FACTS letter in the margin — this makes elaboration visible and prevents random expansion.

FROM BROAD → DEVELOPED (with a Tipping-Point move)

"Trees are important because they help cities."

"Trees are important in cities because their leaves provide shade. **For example**, a shaded playground can stay cooler than an open area in direct sunlight. **This cause-and-effect relationship** helps people use outdoor spaces more safely during hot weather."

Avoiding the Elaboration Dump

More elaboration is not always better. A paragraph overloaded with definitions, examples, facts, and stories can lose focus. The Referee helps the writer keep only the moves that serve the idea. And at Grade 3, statistics come from reliable *provided* sources — never invented.

Transfer to the WCR: DEEP FACTS strengthens the **Explanation** portion of the TREES plan. After using textual evidence, the writer can define a key idea, give a source-based example, explain a process, compare ideas, or identify cause and effect — so the evidence actually *means* something.

Teacher Script — Choosing a Move Together

SAY

"Here's our broad statement. What does it leave unexplained — what would the Fans still want to know?"

SAY

"We have two or three DEEP FACTS options. Which one best serves our reader? Let's add it — and then connect it right back to our central idea."

► *Model adding the elaboration, then have students label the selected move (D, E, E, P, F, A, C, T, or S) in the margin so the choice is visible.*

" " = say word-for-word · ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Locker Room Reflection

- Which elaboration moves do my students already use naturally?
- Which moves need explicit modeling and mentor examples?
- How will students verify that facts and statistics come from a real source?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

When a student is stuck on "add more," don't repeat the demand — offer the menu. Naming the move ("try a *Define* here, or a *Cause and Effect*") turns a vague request into a concrete, teachable choice.

FINISH STRONG

Elaboration becomes manageable when the writer has a menu. DEEP FACTS turns an undeveloped idea into a purposeful explanation built for the needs of the Fans.

The Final Drive

Writing conclusions that finish the thinking.

BIG IDEA

A conclusion should complete the purpose of the piece — not merely announce that the writer has stopped.

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GRADE 3

3.11(B)(ii) — develop drafts into a focused, structured, coherent piece by organizing with purposeful structure, including a conclusion.

GRADE 4

4.11(B) — conclusions that resolve a more developed line of reasoning or narrative.

GRADE 5

5.11(B) — endings that land the significance of a sustained composition with control.

ELPS: c.5(G) — narrating, describing, and explaining a completed idea with increasing specificity.

Writers often reach the final lines with less energy than they had at the start. The result is a rushed ending — "That is why," "The end," or a repeated thesis with no sense of completion. The final drive requires **conditioning**, because the writer must still make meaningful choices when the brain is tired. A purposeful conclusion helps the Fans understand what the whole piece added up to.

THE CHEERLEADER SAYS

"You are not done because the page is almost full. You are done when the thinking is complete."

Use the Opening Promise

Revisit the introduction. Did the writer promise to explain two reasons? The conclusion should reflect what those reasons revealed. Did the narrative open with a problem? The ending should show the outcome or meaning of that problem. Connecting the opening and the conclusion strengthens coherence — students can draw a line from the first paragraph to the last and write one phrase describing the connection.

Fourth-Quarter Energy

Students may need a brief physical and cognitive reset before concluding: stand, breathe, reread the thesis or central idea, and write the final purpose in one phrase. This keeps fatigue from producing an empty ending.

Transfer to the WCR: a WCR conclusion can be brief, but it should reinforce the thesis and include the significant inference when appropriate. Students should avoid adding new evidence at the very end unless it is explained and connected.

Teacher Script – Landing the Ending

SAY

"Before we end, let's reread our prompt, our opening, and our big body ideas. In one phrase: what is the most important thing you want your Fans to understand now?"

SAY

"Now write an ending that *develops* that understanding — don't just copy your opening back to us."

► *Collect a few anonymous conclusions and sort them by function — repeated, unrelated, abrupt, or purposeful. Students grasp endings faster when they compare the effect on the Fans.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine – The Final Drive

1

Reread the prompt, introduction, and major body ideas.

2

State the most important final understanding in one phrase.

3

Write a genre-appropriate conclusion that develops rather than copies the opening.

4

Invite the Fans to identify what remains after the final sentence.

Locker Room Reflection

- Which conclusion pattern do my students overuse — repeated, unrelated, or abrupt?
- Do students save enough energy for the final drive, or run out before it?
- How do I help students feel "done when the thinking is complete," not when the page is full?

For the Coach – Teacher Tip

Sort anonymous conclusions by function with the class. When students see the difference between an abrupt stop and a purposeful finish on real examples, they start writing endings that actually land.

FINISH STRONG

A strong ending is not the moment the writer runs out of page. It is the moment the thinking is complete — and the Fans leave knowing exactly what it all meant.

Focus, Structure, and Coherence

Building a draft that stays on course and works as a whole.

BIG IDEA

A strong draft is not a collection of good sentences. It is a coordinated piece in which every part serves the same purpose.

☉ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(B) develop drafts into a focused, structured, and coherent piece; **3.11(B)(i–iii)** purposeful introduction, conclusion, and engaging idea with relevant details.

GRADE 4

4.11(B) — sustain focus and coherent structure across a longer, multi-paragraph composition.

GRADE 5

5.11(B) — control focus, structure, and coherence deliberately across the whole piece.

ELPS: c.5(F) & c.5(G) — using cohesive devices and organizing writing so relationships between ideas are clear.

A team can have talented players and still perform poorly if each person runs a different play. Writing can contain interesting sentences and still confuse the reader when the ideas do not share a focus, follow a purposeful structure, or connect coherently. This chapter coaches the writer to make the whole piece work together.

Teach structure as a *choice linked to purpose*, not a fixed number of paragraphs. A three-paragraph composition can be coherent or confusing depending on the relationship among its ideas.

Coherence: The Writing Holds Together

Coherence comes from logical order, consistent focus, clear references, transitions, and enough explanation to connect ideas. Students often add transition words without improving coherence — "first," "next," and "finally" cannot repair ideas placed in an illogical order. Have students **orally retell the path** of the draft: "First I introduce..., then I explain..., finally I show..." If the path cannot be stated clearly, the structure needs revision, not more transition words.

The Whole-Draft Check

Writers need chances to move beyond sentence-level correction and view the entire piece — reading aloud, creating a reverse outline, and labeling the job of each part. This is how a writer sees the forest, not just the trees.

The Reverse-TREES Check (for a WCR): a response is coherent when the **T**hesis answers the prompt, each **E**vidence–**E**xplanation unit supports that thesis, transitions show the **R**elationships, and the **S**ignificance completes the same line of reasoning. Walk the plan backward to confirm every part is present and connected.

Transfer to the WCR: if any evidence-explanation unit does not support the thesis, or the conclusion drifts from the reasoning, the piece has a coherence gap — not a transition-word gap.

Teacher Script — Reading for the Whole

SAY

"Let's label the job of each sentence — is it stating the idea, giving evidence, explaining, or connecting? Now let's group the sentences that do the same job."

SAY

"Which purposeful structure fits our idea best? Let's choose one, then add a connection sentence that helps our Fans follow the organization."

► *Have students orally retell the draft's path. If they can't say it cleanly, the structure — not the wording — is what needs the fix.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — The Whole-Draft Check

1

Write the controlling idea or thesis in one sentence.

2

Label the job of each paragraph or major sentence.

3

Reorder, combine, or remove parts that don't support the structure.

4

Read from the Fans' point of view and repair any missing connection.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students revise structure, or only fix sentences?
- Can my writers state the path of their draft aloud in one clean sentence?
- Do we treat transitions as a repair for illogical order — when the order itself is the problem?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

When a draft feels "off" but the sentences are fine, resist line-editing. Ask the writer to say the path aloud and label each part's job — coherence problems hide at the whole-piece level, not the sentence level.

FINISH STRONG

Focused, structured, coherent writing feels like a coordinated team. Every part knows its job, every move supports the purpose, and the Fans can follow the play from beginning to end.

PART FOUR

4

Halftime: The Revision Film Room

15 · Revision Is Not Editing • 16 · Sentence Conditioning

17 · Word Choice Agility • 18 · The Four Revision Plays

19 · Coherence: Does It Flow? • 20 · Clarity: Can My Fans Understand Me?

Revision Is Not Editing

Separating stronger thinking from rule correction.

BIG IDEA

The Coach revises the play. The Referee checks whether the play follows the rules.

© TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(C) revise drafts to improve sentence structure, word choice, coherence, and clarity; **3.11(D)** edit using standard English conventions.

GRADE 4

4.11(C) / 4.11(D) — revise for meaning and edit conventions across longer pieces.

GRADE 5

5.11(C) / 5.11(D) — independent revision of meaning and precise editing of conventions.

ELPS: c.5(F) & c.5(G) — refining written language for clarity and using conventions with increasing accuracy.

Many students believe revision means correcting spelling, adding a capital, or erasing a punctuation mistake. Those actions matter — but they are *editing*. Revision is the larger act of seeing the writing again and making the meaning stronger. A draft can be mechanically correct and still be unfocused, underdeveloped, or confusing.

Two Passes, Two Questions

The Coach Pass — Revision

"How can this writing become stronger for its purpose and Fans?"

Improve development, structure, clarity, and craft.

The Referee Pass — Editing

"Where does this writing need a convention correction?"

Check sentences, agreement, tense, spelling, punctuation.

CHAPTER 15 • REVISION IS NOT EDITING

Keeping the two questions separate reduces cognitive overload. For young writers, one editing pass should not attempt thirty-two convention breakouts at once — select one or two targets connected to current instruction, plus one individualized target from the student's draft.

Revision as Courage

Some students resist revision because they believe changing the draft means the first attempt failed. Reframe revision as evidence of expertise: athletes adjust after watching film because they understand the game *better*, not because the first half had no value. Let the Fans celebrate a before-and-after sentence — students see that the first version was a real start, and the revision made it stronger.

Transfer to the WCR: use a short Coach pass to check thesis, evidence, explanation, and inference *before* a Referee pass for sentence completeness, agreement, tense, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Meaning comes first; correctness protects meaning.

Teacher Script — Two Passes on One Draft

SAY

"First we put on our Coach hat. We're not fixing spelling yet — we're asking, 'How could this be stronger for our reader?' and making the meaning better."

SAY

"Now — and only now — we invite the Referee. Let's check one or two rules we've been practicing, not every rule at once."

► *Mark the two kinds of change differently — for example, a green C for Coach revisions and a blue R for Referee corrections. Keep it simple: the goal is the conceptual distinction, not decoration.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — Halftime Adjustments

1

Read the draft only for meaning, purpose, and audience.

2

Make Coach changes that improve development, structure, clarity, or craft.

3

Reread the revised text.

4

Invite the Referee to check one or two selected convention targets.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students know the difference between revising the message and editing the rules?
- Do I ask for meaning changes first, or jump straight to corrections?
- How do I help students see revision as expertise, not as evidence of failure?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Use different colors or symbols for revision and editing, but keep the system simple — a green **C** for Coach, a blue **R** for Referee. The point is the conceptual distinction between strengthening meaning and correcting conventions.

FINISH STRONG

A polished composition needs both voices. The Coach strengthens what the writing says and how it works; the Referee makes sure conventions help the Fans read it accurately.

Sentence Conditioning

Revising sentence structure for rhythm, variety, and meaning.

BIG IDEA

Sentence structure is not only a grammar issue — it is a craft tool that controls pace, emphasis, connection, and clarity.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(C)(i) — revise drafts to improve sentence structure.

GRADE 4

4.11(C)(i) — vary and control sentence structure for effect across a longer piece.

GRADE 5

5.11(C)(i) — use sentence structure deliberately to control pace, emphasis, and meaning.

ELPS: c.5(F) — writing using a variety of grammatical structures with increasing accuracy.

A team that runs the same play repeatedly becomes predictable. Writing built from sentences of the same length and pattern can feel equally flat. Third-grade writers often produce strings of short sentences joined by *and*, or long sentences that carry too many ideas without control. Sentence conditioning teaches students to hear and shape the movement of language.

Separating Overloaded Sentences

Some writers connect every thought with *and*, creating a sentence that loses control. Teach students to find where one complete idea ends and another begins. **A period is not a failure to write a complex sentence — it is a tool for clarity.** Students can slash an overloaded sentence into meaning units, then decide which units belong together and which deserve separate sentences.

Changing Beginnings and Emphasis

Sentence beginnings can show time, place, cause, contrast, or focus — and they guide the reader into the sentence differently:

TIME	"After practice, the team reviewed the film together."
CAUSE	"Because the bridge collapsed, the drivers turned back."
PLACE	"Across the field, the runners lined up for the relay."

These choices connect sentence structure with the prepositional phrases, adverbs, and conjunctions taught later in the Referee's Rulebook. Let the Fans test the effect: which version is easiest to follow, and which places the emphasis where you want it?

Transfer to the WCR: combine a claim and a reason, separate evidence from explanation, and use sentence beginnings like "This shows" or "Because of this" — without repeating the same frame in every paragraph.

Teacher Script — Combine or Separate

SAY

"Let's read this paragraph aloud and listen. Do we hear the same short pattern over and over, or one sentence carrying too many ideas?"

SAY

"We'll try it two ways — combine this pair, or split that long one — and keep the version that makes the meaning clearest."

► *Model slashing an overloaded sentence into meaning units. Remind students a strong paragraph can include controlled short sentences — the structure should fit the job.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — Condition the Sentences

1

Read the paragraph aloud and mark repeated or overloaded structures.

2

Choose one pair to combine or one long sentence to separate.

3

Try two versions and select the one that best serves the meaning.

4

Use the Referee to confirm complete, correctly joined sentences.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students hear their sentences, or only see them?
- Do I treat the period as a clarity tool, or push every writer toward longer sentences?
- How do I help students vary sentence beginnings for real emphasis, not just for variety?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Do not require every sentence to be long or complex. Strong sentence conditioning includes controlled short sentences. Ask what the sentence needs to *do*, then choose the structure that performs that job.

FINISH STRONG

Sentence variety is not decoration. It is coordinated movement. Athletic Writers shape sentences so the Fans can follow the action, the reasoning, and the emphasis without stumbling.

Word Choice Agility

Revising for precise, purposeful, and genre-appropriate language.

BIG IDEA

The strongest word is not always the longest word — it is the word that carries the exact meaning the writer intends.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(C)(ii) — revise drafts to improve word choice; supports craft across **3.12(A–C)**.

GRADE 4

4.11(C)(ii) — choose precise, purposeful vocabulary suited to genre and audience.

GRADE 5

5.11(C)(ii) — control tone and register through deliberate word choice.

ELPS: c.5(B) — writing with newly acquired academic vocabulary used accurately and appropriately.

Quick feet help an athlete adjust to changing conditions. Word choice agility helps a writer adjust language to purpose, audience, genre, and meaning. Students sometimes believe stronger word choice means replacing familiar words with complicated synonyms — but that can produce language the writer does not fully understand and the Fans cannot easily follow. Precise language is about *fit*, not size.

Match Language to Genre and Fans

Poetry may invite sensory and figurative language. Informational writing requires accurate, domain-specific vocabulary. Opinion writing needs clear evaluative language and a respectful tone. A letter changes depending on the recipient. Students should not use the same voice in every event — word choice agility includes shifting register while staying authentic and understandable.

Avoid the Synonym Trap

A thesaurus offers possibilities, not automatic replacements. Words with similar dictionary meanings can carry different tones or uses. A student may replace *said* with *proclaimed* when *whispered* or *asked* would be more accurate.

The Fit Test — before you keep a new word: read the sentence aloud → define the new word right there in the sentence → ask whether it matches the context and the Fans. If it does not fit all three, it is the wrong word — even if it sounds impressive.

Transfer to the WCR: precise academic words can strengthen reasoning — *demonstrates, reveals, explains, contributes, contrasts, as a result* — but students should use only words they understand and can apply accurately.

Teacher Script — Testing a Word for Fit

SAY

"Let's underline one word that feels vague or repeated. What is the exact meaning we want here?"

SAY

"Now we'll try two or three options in the sentence and read each aloud. We keep the one that fits our meaning and our Fans — not just the fanciest one."

► *Model the fit test: read aloud, define the new word in the sentence, and ask whether it matches the context. Then confirm its use and spelling with the Referee.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — Sharpen the Words

1

Underline one vague, repeated, or weak word in each paragraph.

2

State the exact meaning intended.

3

Generate two or three alternatives and test them in the sentence.

4

Select the clearest genre-appropriate word and check its use and spelling.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students equate "harder words" with "better writing"?
- Do we teach word choice as fit for meaning and audience, or as thesaurus swapping?
- Which purposeful word banks would most help my writers transfer strong language?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Build class word banks by *purpose*, not random lists:

Movement verbs

Thinking verbs

Comparison words

Cause & effect language

Sensory words

Respectful opinion language

Functional banks are far easier to transfer into real writing than alphabetical vocabulary lists.

FINISH STRONG

The right word does not show off. It shows exactly what the writer means — so the Fans understand it the first time.

The Four Revision Plays

Add, delete, combine, and rearrange for coherence and clarity.

BIG IDEA

Revision becomes teachable when students can call one of four specific plays and explain the problem it solves.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(C)(iii–vi) add, delete, combine, and rearrange for coherence; **3.11(C)(vii–x)** the same four plays for clarity.

GRADE 4

4.11(C) — the four plays applied across longer, multi-paragraph revision.

GRADE 5

5.11(C) — independent diagnosis and use of the four plays for coherence and clarity.

ELPS: c.5(F) & c.5(G) — revising written work for coherence, clarity, and accuracy.

"Revise your paper" is too broad for many young writers. They may reread, change one word, and declare the revision complete — because they do not know what actions revision includes. The TEKS name four powerful plays:

ADD

Supply what the Fans need — a missing explanation, detail, or connection.

DELETE

Remove what weakens the play — drift, repetition, or an inaccurate detail. A sentence earns its place by doing a job.

COMBINE

Bring related meaning together — connect related sentences and reduce choppiness.

REARRANGE

Put the right idea in the right position, so a useful detail no longer confuses the Fans.

CHAPTER 18 • THE FOUR REVISION PLAYS

Each play solves a specific problem. **Deleting** is hardest, because students may equate more words with better writing — teach that every team has a limited roster. When the Coach **combines**, the Referee then checks the new sentence: meaningful revision comes first, correct punctuation and conjunctions follow.

Calling the Right Play — A Worked Example

On a draft about saving energy, a writer might:

ADD the missing explanation of *why* lights should be turned off. **DELETE** the unrelated detail about the blue walls. **COMBINE** the two repeated "turn off the lights" sentences. **REARRANGE** the explanation so it follows the action it explains.

Naming the play — then explaining the problem it solved — is what turns revision from guesswork into skill.

Transfer to the WCR: after drafting, run a four-play check on each TREES component. **Add** missing explanation, **delete** repeated or off-prompt material, **combine** related evidence and explanation, and **rearrange** so every piece of evidence is followed by the reasoning it supports.

Teacher Script — Diagnose, Then Call the Play

SAY

"Let's find one spot that isn't working for our Fans. What exactly is the problem — is something missing, extra, choppy, or out of order?"

SAY

"Now we name the play: Add, Delete, Combine, or Rearrange. Then we make the change and tell each other how it helped the reader."

► *Make the change visible — arrows, insertion marks, cuts, or movement — so the revision is a play the whole class can see, not an invisible reread.*

" " = say word-for-word · ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — Run a Revision Play

1

Identify one coherence or clarity problem in the draft.

2

Name the revision play that directly addresses it.

3

Make the change visibly (arrows, insertions, cuts, movement).

4

Reread from the Fans' point of view and explain why the play improved the text.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students have specific revision actions to call, or just "reread and fix"?
- Which play do they avoid most — and is it usually Delete?
- Do students explain how a change served the Fans, or just make it silently?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Post the four plays as a visible menu. When a student says "I don't know how to revise," respond with the diagnostic question — "missing, extra, choppy, or out of order?" — and the play names itself.

FINISH STRONG

Revision stops being a vague command when writers can diagnose the problem, call the correct play, and explain how the change serves the Fans.

Coherence: Does It Flow?

Helping ideas fit together across sentences and paragraphs.

BIG IDEA

Coherence is the invisible teamwork that makes separate ideas feel like one connected composition.

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GRADE 3

3.11(C)(iii–vi) add, delete, combine, and rearrange ideas for coherence; supports the focused, structured, coherent draft in **3.11(B)**.

GRADE 4

4.11(C) — connect ideas coherently across a longer, multi-paragraph piece.

GRADE 5

5.11(C) — control relationships and transitions so a sustained composition reads as one line of thought.

ELPS: c.5(F) — using cohesive devices and clear references so relationships between ideas are visible.

A relay team succeeds only when each runner connects smoothly with the next — a dropped baton can ruin an otherwise strong performance. Writing depends on handoffs too. Sentences and paragraphs must connect logically so the Fans can follow the developing idea. Coherence is more than adding transition words; it comes from shared focus, logical order, and clean connections.

Pronoun and Reference Clarity

Coherence weakens when readers cannot tell what a pronoun or phrase refers to. "They fixed it" may be grammatically complete but confusing if several people and objects appear in the sentence before. The Referee and the Fans work together: identify the unclear reference, then replace or reposition it so the reader knows exactly who or what continues the action.

Evidence-Explanation Pairing — The Clean Handoff

In a WCR or opinion piece, evidence should stay close to the explanation it supports. When writers list several details and explain them much later, the Fans must carry too much information. Teach the pair: **evidence, then explanation** — each pair acts like a clean handoff in the reasoning relay.

The Coherence Scan: draw a line from thesis to reason, reason to evidence, evidence to explanation, and explanation back to thesis.

Thesis → Reason → Evidence → Explanation → back to Thesis

Any broken line identifies a missing or misplaced connection — that is where a revision play is needed.

Transfer to the WCR: a broken line in the scan is a coherence gap, not a transition-word gap. Fix the *order* or the missing *connection* first; the transition word comes last.

Teacher Script – Naming the Relationship

SAY

"Let's read these two sentences next to each other. What is the relationship between them — time, example, cause, contrast, addition, or conclusion?"

SAY

"If we can't name the relationship, the order may be the problem — not the words. Let's reorder first, then choose a transition that matches the relationship."

► Have students draw the coherence-scan lines on a draft. Wherever a line breaks or crosses, that handoff needs repair.

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine – Check the Handoffs

1

Read adjacent sentences and name their relationship.

2

Reorder ideas until the logic is clear even without transition words.

3

Repair unclear pronouns or references.

4

Add precise transition language and reread the handoff.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students use transition words as decoration, or as relationship signals?
- Where do their "batons" get dropped — between sentences, or between paragraphs?
- Do we fix order first, or reach for a transition word to patch an illogical sequence?

For the Coach – Teacher Tip

Limit transition-word lists. Instead, organize transitions by *relationship* — time, example, cause, contrast, addition, and conclusion. Students should choose a relationship first and a word second.

FINISH STRONG

Coherence is the teamwork the Fans never notice — until it's missing. When every handoff is clean, separate ideas move down the field as one.

Clarity: Can My Fans Understand Me?

Revising so the intended meaning reaches the reader.

BIG IDEA

Clarity is not what the writer meant in their mind — it is what the Fans can understand from the words on the page.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(C)(vii–x) add, delete, combine, and rearrange ideas for clarity; supports purpose and audience in **3.11(A)** and publication in **3.11(E)**.

GRADE 4

4.11(C) — revise for clarity so a developed piece reads cleanly for its audience.

GRADE 5

5.11(C) — take full responsibility for the reader's understanding across a sustained composition.

ELPS: c.5(G) — narrating, describing, and explaining so meaning is clear and complete for the reader.

Writers know more than they write. Because the full idea already exists in the writer's mind, missing information can stay invisible — but the Fans have access only to the words on the page. Clarity requires the writer to step outside their private understanding and evaluate what a reader can actually follow. Clarity also depends on sentence boundaries: a run-on may contain strong ideas, yet the reader cannot tell where one thought ends and the next begins.

The Read-Aloud Test

Reading aloud slows the writer and reveals missing words, repeated phrases, awkward structures, and unexplained jumps. Partner reading is even more revealing, because the writer *hears* where another person hesitates. The Fans respond with questions, not rewriting — and the Coach chooses the revision.

Fans ask questions; the writer keeps the pen:

"Who does they refer to?" · "What happened between these two sentences?" · "What does this point back to?"

Each question marks a spot to Add, Delete, Combine, or Rearrange.

Clarity Without Overexplaining

Writers can also bury meaning under unnecessary language. Deleting repetition and combining related sentences makes the message easier to understand. **Clear does not mean longer** — clear means the needed information is easy to locate and connect.

Transfer to the WCR: a clear response explicitly answers the prompt, names the source or text when needed, identifies the evidence, and explains the connection. Students should not lean on "this proves it" unless the sentence clearly states what *this* and *it* mean.

Teacher Script — Reading as a Stranger

SAY

"Let's read this as if we know nothing except what's on the page. Every place we have to guess or ask a question is a place our Fans will get stuck."

SAY

"For each question, we call a play — Add the missing piece, Delete the repeat, Combine, or Rearrange — until a stranger could follow it."

► *Have a partner read the draft aloud and mark every hesitation. The writer keeps the pen and chooses each revision.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — The Clarity Check

1

Read the draft as if you know nothing beyond the page.

2

Mark any question a Fan might ask.

3

Call ADD, DELETE, COMBINE, or REARRANGE to answer it.

4

Read aloud and verify the main idea and relationships are easy to follow.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students assume the reader already knows what they know?
- How often do we use the read-aloud test to catch invisible gaps?
- Do students ask "clear to whom?" before deciding a piece is clear?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Use the phrase "**clear to whom?**" Clarity always depends on audience: a technical word may be perfectly clear to a science class but require a definition for younger readers. The Fans decide what "clear" means.

FINISH STRONG

The Athletic Writer takes responsibility for the distance between intention and understanding. Clarity closes that distance — so the Fans receive the message the writer meant to send.

PART FIVE

5

The Referee's Rulebook

*21 · Complete Sentence Training • 22 · Verb Game Clock
23 · Noun Roster • 24 · Modifier Conditioning
25 · Position Players: Prepositions • 26 · Pronoun Substitutions
27 · Conjunction Team Plays • 28 · Capitalization Rules
29 · Punctuation Whistles • 30 · Spelling Fundamentals*

Complete Sentence Training

Simple and compound sentences with subject-verb agreement.

BIG IDEA

A complete sentence gives the Fans a whole play: who or what, what happens or is true, and a finished thought.

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GRADE 3

3.11(D)(i) edit complete simple sentences with subject-verb agreement; **3.11(D)(ii)** edit complete compound sentences with subject-verb agreement.

GRADE 4

4.11(D) — complete simple and compound sentences with agreement in more developed writing.

GRADE 5

5.11(D) — sentence completeness and agreement controlled across complex compositions.

ELPS: c.5(F) — writing using complete, grammatically correct sentence structures with increasing accuracy.

Before a referee can judge whether a play follows the rules, the play must actually exist. Sentence **fragments** leave part of the action missing. **Run-ons** push several plays together without clear boundaries. **Subject-verb disagreement** sends mismatched players onto the field. A complete sentence has a subject, a verb, and a finished thought — the Referee's starting point.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Subjects and verbs must agree in number and person: "The student **writes**" and "The students **write**." Interrupting phrases can trick a writer — "The box of markers **sits** on the shelf" agrees with *box*, not *markers*. Use clear oral contrasts: "Who is doing or being? Which verb belongs with that subject?"

A Focused Editing Pass — Give the Referee One Job

Students cannot check every convention at once. During a *sentence* pass, the Referee does one specific, visible job:

THE SENTENCE-PASS MARKS

The busy bee = underline the **subject** once · flies = underline the **verb** twice

Circle the **end mark** · Place a ✓ if the thought is complete

For a compound sentence, draw a **line between the two independent clauses**.

This visible process helps the Referee perform a specific job rather than vaguely "checking grammar." A student who marks the subject and verb can immediately see agreement — and a fragment or run-on becomes obvious.

Transfer to the WCR: during the final Referee pass, check each sentence for a subject, a verb, a complete thought, and an end mark. For compound sentences, confirm both clauses are complete and the comma-conjunction pattern is correct.

Teacher Script — Marking a Sentence Together

SAY

"Let's put on our Referee stripes for one job only — complete sentences. Underline who or what is doing or being once, the action or being-word twice."

SAY

"Now the test: do the subject and verb match, and is this a finished thought? If yes, circle the end mark and give it a check."

► *Model on a student-like sentence, then have students run the same subject-verb-boundary routine on their own drafts — not only on isolated worksheets. That's where transfer happens.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — The Sentence Pass

1

Read one sentence at a time, not the whole page.

2

Mark the subject and verb; confirm they agree.

3

Test whether the thought is complete.

4

Check the boundary and any compound-sentence punctuation.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students confuse sentence *length* with sentence *completeness*?
- Do they edit their own drafts, or only isolated worksheet sentences?
- Which agreement traps (interrupting phrases, compound subjects) trip them most?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Teach sentence correction inside student-like writing, not only isolated worksheets. Transfer occurs when students apply the same subject-verb-boundary routine to their own drafts.

FINISH STRONG

A complete sentence is the Referee's starting point. When every play has a who, a what, and a finished thought, the Fans can follow the game — and every other rule has something to stand on.

The Verb Game Clock

Controlling past, present, and future tense.

BIG IDEA

Verb tense tells the Fans when the action happens — uncontrolled shifts move the reader to another time without warning.

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GRADE 3

3.11(D)(iii) edit past tense; **3.11(D)(iv)** edit present tense; **3.11(D)(v)** edit future tense.

GRADE 4

4.11(D) — control verb tense and consistency across longer pieces.

GRADE 5

5.11(D) — maintain intentional tense and manage purposeful shifts across a full composition.

ELPS: c.5(F) — using verb tenses accurately and consistently with increasing control.

Every athletic event has a clock that tells players and spectators where they are in the game. Verbs do the same job in writing: **past** tense places action before now, **present** tense places it now or describes an ongoing truth, and **future** tense points ahead. Young writers often shift tense by accident because the event stays vivid in their minds.

PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

the tree grew

the tree grows

the tree will grow

← before now · now / always true · ahead →

CHAPTER 22 · THE VERB GAME CLOCK

Have students draw a **timeline** beside a paragraph and place each verb on it. Any verb that lands on the wrong part of the line becomes an editing target — the timeline makes an accidental jump easy to see. Future tense usually uses *will* or *is going to* (will grow, will write, is going to visit) for predictions, plans, and some conclusions.

Intentional Tense Shifts — Craft, Not Error

Not every tense change is a mistake. A narrative written in past tense may end with a present reflection: "I *learned* that patience matters, and I still *remember* that lesson." The Coach decides whether a shift serves meaning; the Referee confirms the shift is clear. Teach students to **name the reason** for a shift: an unexplained change is a problem, but a purposeful change is craft.

Transfer to the WCR: a written response often uses present tense to explain what a text shows — "The character *demonstrates* courage" — and past tense when recounting a specific event from the text. Students should keep a clear pattern and avoid accidental switching.

Teacher Script — Reading the Verbs Only

SAY

"What time frame is this paragraph in — past, present, or future? Let's name it first."

SAY

"Now let's read just the verbs, out loud, in order. Does the clock stay steady, or did we jump to another time by accident?"

► *Reading only the verbs makes tense shifts jump out, because the content isn't there to distract. When a verb lands on the wrong time, keep, revise, or explain it.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — Check the Clock

1

Name the primary time frame of the paragraph or piece.

2

Circle the verbs.

3

Check each verb against the time frame and the subject.

4

Keep, revise, or explain any tense shift.

Locker Room Reflection

- Which irregular past-tense verbs cause my students the most difficulty?
- Can my students tell an accidental tense shift from a purposeful one?
- Do we use the timeline or verbs-only read to make shifts visible?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Let students read a paragraph using only the verbs. The bare sequence makes tense shifts far more obvious than reading full sentences, where the content can hide the pattern.

FINISH STRONG

When the verb clock is set and kept, the Fans always know when the action is happening — and the writer only shifts time on purpose.

The Noun Roster

Singular, plural, common, and proper nouns in composition.

BIG IDEA

Nouns name the players, places, objects, and ideas on the writing field — and precise nouns improve both conventions and craft.

☉ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(D)(vi) singular nouns; **(vii)** plural nouns; **(viii)** common nouns; **(ix)** proper nouns.

GRADE 4

4.11(D) — noun number, category, and capitalization across more developed writing.

GRADE 5

5.11(D) — precise, correctly formed nouns and clear reference across a full composition.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(F) — using nouns accurately and building content vocabulary with precision.

A roster identifies who belongs in the game; nouns identify who and what belong in a sentence. Writers need control of four things: number, category, capitalization, and precision. A **singular** noun names one; a **plural** noun names more than one. A **common** noun names any member of a group; a **proper** noun names a specific one and takes a capital.

Precise Nouns as Craft

The Coach can strengthen word choice by trading a vague noun for a precise one. A precise noun often reduces the need for extra explanation and makes informational writing more accurate:

VAGUE

"The thing broke."

VAGUE

"An animal ran across the road."

PRECISE

"The **axle** snapped."

PRECISE

"A **coyote** darted across the road."

Still, define unfamiliar domain-specific nouns when the Fans may not know them — precision and audience awareness work together.

Noun Reference Across Sentences

Repeating the same proper noun in every sentence can sound mechanical, while replacing every noun with a pronoun creates confusion. Writers balance noun repetition and pronoun substitution so the Fans can always follow the reference. (This sets up pronoun case and reference in Chapter 26.)

Transfer to the WCR: precise nouns identify the characters, texts, events, and concepts a response is about — no vague "it" or "the thing." The Referee checks noun number and capitalization; the Fans check that repeated nouns and pronouns stay easy to follow.

Two Questions, Two Voices

Connect noun editing to word-choice revision by asking two separate questions on every noun:

The Referee asks: "Is the noun *correct*?" (number, capitalization) **The Coach asks:** "Is the noun *precise*?"

Teacher Script – Correct, Then Precise

SAY

"Let's circle the nouns. First the Referee's job: is each one the right number, and are the specific names capitalized?"

SAY

"Now the Coach's job: is there a vague noun we could make precise? 'The thing' — what exactly is it?"

► *Underline proper nouns and verify the capital. Then upgrade one vague noun to a precise one, and notice how much explanation it saves.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine – Roster Check

1

Circle the nouns in the paragraph.

2

Check singular and plural forms and related agreement.

3

Underline proper nouns and verify capitalization.

4

Replace one vague noun with a more precise word.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students separate "correct" nouns from "precise" nouns?
- Which noun errors recur — plural forms, or proper-noun capitals?
- Do students balance noun repetition and pronouns so the reference stays clear?

For the Coach – Teacher Tip

Connect noun editing to word-choice revision. Ask two separate questions: "Is the noun correct?" and "Is the noun precise?" The Referee handles correctness; the Coach handles precision.

FINISH STRONG

A clean roster is more than correctness. When every noun is the right number, properly capitalized, and precise, the Fans know exactly who and what is on the field.

Modifier Conditioning

Comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs of time and manner.

BIG IDEA

Modifiers should sharpen meaning — not pile decoration onto a sentence.

© TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(D)(x) comparative adjectives; **(xi)** superlative adjectives; **(xii)** adverbs of time; **(xiii)** adverbs of manner.

GRADE 4

4.11(D) — comparative/superlative forms and adverbs used precisely in developed writing.

GRADE 5

5.11(D) — modifiers controlled for precision and supported by evidence in evaluation.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(F) — using descriptive and comparative language accurately and with increasing precision.

Athletes adjust speed, distance, timing, and intensity. Writers use **modifiers** to make similar adjustments in language. Adjectives describe nouns; adverbs clarify *when* or *how* an action occurs. Comparative forms compare two things (*faster, more careful*); superlative forms compare three or more (*fastest, most careful*) — and the Referee checks that the form matches the number being compared.

Adverbs of Time — Sequence with Meaning

Time adverbs sequence action and information: *yesterday, later, soon, finally, often*. Choose the word that matches the actual relationship — **"finally" should signal the last step**, not simply another sentence in the middle.

Adverbs of Manner — or a Stronger Verb?

Adverbs of manner explain how an action occurs: *carefully*, *silently*, *eagerly*. They can clarify an action — but a precise verb is sometimes stronger. The Coach chooses whether the modifier or the verb best carries the meaning; the Referee checks form and placement.

Modifier or verb? "Walked quietly" and "crept" create different effects. Often the single precise verb is sharper than a verb-plus-adverb. Ask: does the adverb add exact information, or would a stronger verb say it better in one word?

The same test catches **empty intensifiers**. "Very big" rarely beats "enormous"; "really fast" rarely beats "sprinted." Delete the intensifier and test a more precise noun or verb.

Transfer to the WCR: modifiers can clarify comparisons between characters, solutions, or ideas — but an *evaluative* modifier like **more effective** or **most important** must be earned. Support it with evidence and explanation, not just the word itself.

Teacher Script — Earn Every Modifier

SAY

"Let's circle the describing words. For each one: does it add exact information, or is it just decoration we could cut?"

SAY

"When someone writes 'the best solution,' I ask two things: is 'best' the correct superlative form — and what evidence makes it the best?"

► *Teach modifiers in pairs with an evidence question, so grammar and reasoning grow together. Try trading a verb-plus-adverb for one precise verb and compare the effect.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — Condition the Modifiers

1

Circle comparative, superlative, time, and manner modifiers.

2

Check forms and identify what is being compared or modified.

3

Delete empty intensifiers and test a more precise noun or verb.

4

Keep the wording that gives the Fans the clearest meaning.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students add modifiers to decorate, or to sharpen meaning?
- Do they know when a single precise verb beats a verb-plus-adverb?
- Do we pair evaluative modifiers ("best," "most important") with evidence?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Teach modifiers in pairs with evidence questions. When a student writes "the best solution," ask both: "Is *best* the correct superlative form?" and "What evidence supports that claim?" Grammar and reasoning grow together.

FINISH STRONG

The strongest modifiers earn their place. When each one sharpens the meaning — or gives way to a more precise noun or verb — the writing is exact, not just decorated.

Position Players: Prepositions

Using prepositions and prepositional phrases to locate relationships.

BIG IDEA

Prepositions show relationships in space, time, direction, and connection — they help readers locate the action and the ideas.

☉ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(D)(xiv) edit prepositions; **3.11(D)(xv)** edit prepositional phrases.

GRADE 4

4.11(D) — prepositional phrases used for detail and variety across a developed piece.

GRADE 5

5.11(D) — placement and punctuation of phrases controlled for clarity and emphasis.

ELPS: c.5(F) — using phrases and connecting words to show relationships between ideas.

On an athletic field, position matters — a player may stand *behind* the line, *beside* a teammate, *across* the court, or *near* the goal. Prepositions do this positioning work in sentences: they connect a noun or pronoun to another word and answer **where**, **when**, or **in what relation**. A complete prepositional phrase has a preposition and an object ("across the field," "during the storm").

Varying Sentence Beginnings

Beginning with a prepositional phrase creates variety and emphasis: "After the final bell, the team returned to the lab." A comma after a longer introductory phrase supports readability. The Coach compares versions and asks which one places the most important relationship first.

The Interrupting Phrase – A Hidden Agreement Trap

A prepositional phrase sitting between the subject and the verb can confuse agreement. The fix is a simple trick students can do with a finger:

Cover the phrase to hear the core sentence:

"The basket ~~of apples~~ sits on the table."

Cover "of apples," and you hear the real subject — **basket** (singular) → **sits**, not *sit*. The subject is never inside a prepositional phrase.

This technique links prepositions right back to complete-sentence and subject-verb-agreement editing (Chapter 21).

Transfer to the WCR: prepositional phrases place evidence in context — "At the beginning of the story," "During the storm," "In the second article." Use them accurately, and avoid opening every sentence with the same introductory phrase.

Teacher Script — Position and Say the Phrase

SAY

"Let's underline the prepositions and put brackets around the whole phrase. Does each phrase have an object, and what relationship does it show — where, when, or how it connects?"

SAY

"When a phrase splits the subject and verb, cover it with your finger and read the core sentence. Now — does the verb match the real subject?"

► *Use the classroom as a live grammar field: have a student physically position an object ("under the desk," "beside the door"), say the phrase, then build a complete sentence around it.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — Set the Positions

1

Underline prepositions and bracket each complete prepositional phrase.

2

Check that the phrase has an object and shows the intended relationship.

3

Cover interrupting phrases to verify subject-verb agreement.

4

Revise phrase placement for clarity and sentence variety.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do my students see a prepositional phrase as one unit, not loose words?
- Do interrupting phrases trip their subject-verb agreement?
- Do we use prepositional openings to vary sentences on purpose?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Use the classroom as a live grammar field. Have students position an object and say the phrase aloud, then build a complete sentence around it. Physical placement makes the relationship real before it becomes an editing rule.

FINISH STRONG

Prepositions are the writer's position players. When every phrase is complete and well-placed, the Fans always know where, when, and in what relation the action stands.

Pronoun Substitutions

Subjective, objective, and possessive pronoun cases.

BIG IDEA

Pronouns substitute efficiently for nouns — but the writer must send the correct form into the correct position.

☉ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(D)(xvi) subjective case; **(xvii)** objective case; **(xviii)** possessive case.

GRADE 4

4.11(D) — pronoun case and clear antecedents across developed writing.

GRADE 5

5.11(D) — correct case and unmistakable reference across a full composition.

ELPS: c.5(F) — using pronouns correctly and maintaining clear reference.

Teams substitute players to keep performing without losing the structure of the game. Pronouns substitute for nouns to reduce repetition and connect sentences — but only when the reader knows the pronoun's **antecedent** (the noun it stands for). Each pronoun has a **case** — the right form for its job:

Subjective does the action	I · you · he · she · it · we · they
Objective receives the action	me · you · him · her · it · us · them
Possessive shows ownership	my/mine · your/yours · his · her/hers · its · our/ours · their/theirs

Possessive Case — No Apostrophes

Possessive pronouns show ownership and **never use apostrophes**: *my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, its, our, ours, their, theirs*. Writers most often confuse **its** and **it's** — the Referee's test is simple: try reading it as "it is." If "it is" fits, use **it's**; if it shows ownership, use **its**.

Clear Antecedents — Correct Isn't Always Clear

Correct case does not guarantee clarity. "When Ava talked to Lena, **she** was worried" leaves the Fans unsure *who* was worried. The fix may be to repeat the noun or restructure the sentence. Teach that pronoun repetition is not automatically better than noun repetition — **clarity controls the substitution**.

The removal test for compounds: "Me and Sam / Sam and I went to the lab." Remove the other person and listen: "Me went" is wrong; "I went" is right → "Sam and I." The same test fixes object compounds ("with him and me").

Transfer to the WCR: pronouns help a response avoid repeating a character or author's name — but an unclear reference can damage the reasoning. Check every *this, it, they*, and *he/she* to be sure the Fans can identify the antecedent.

Teacher Script — Form First, Then Reference

SAY

"Circle the pronouns. First, form: is each one subject, object, or possessive — and is it the right one for its job?"

SAY

"Now, reference: draw an arrow from each pronoun to the exact noun it replaces. If you can't be sure who it points to, your Fans can't either."

► *Keep the two checks separate — a student may fix the form but leave the reference unclear. Use the removal test on compound subjects and objects.*

" " = say word-for-word · ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine — Substitute Cleanly

1

Circle the pronouns in one paragraph.

2

Label each as subject, object, or possessive.

3

Use the removal test for compound subjects and objects.

4

Draw an arrow to each antecedent and replace any unclear pronoun.

Locker Room Reflection

- Which pronoun case errors occur most often for my students?
- Do students confuse *its* and *it's*?
- Do they check that every pronoun's antecedent is unmistakable?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Separate the two questions: "Is the pronoun *form* correct?" and "Is the pronoun *reference* clear?" Students may solve one without solving the other — the Referee must check both.

FINISH STRONG

A pronoun is a substitution only the Fans can follow. When the form is correct and the antecedent is unmistakable, the writing stays both smooth and clear.

Conjunction Team Plays

Coordinating conjunctions in compound subjects, predicates, and sentences.

BIG IDEA

Coordinating conjunctions connect equal parts — but the writer must know exactly what is being joined.

☉ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(D)(xix) compound subjects; **(xx)** compound predicates; **(xxi)** compound sentences.

GRADE 4

4.11(D) — coordinating conjunctions used for sentence variety and logical relationships.

GRADE 5

5.11(D) — clause combining controlled for emphasis and cohesion across a composition.

ELPS: c.5(F) — using connecting words to show relationships between ideas.

Writing is filled with teamwork: words join words, subjects join subjects, predicates join predicates, and complete ideas join complete ideas. Coordinating conjunctions — *and*, *but*, *or*, *so*, *yet*, *for*, *nor* — make those connections. The same conjunction can perform different jobs, so memorizing the word is not enough. Writers must identify the **units being connected** and punctuate according to the structure.

Compound Subjects & Predicates

A conjunction can join two subjects that share a predicate ("Lena **and** Omar tested the bridge") — the Referee checks agreement, and *and* usually takes a plural verb. It can also join two predicates ("tested the bridge **and** recorded the data"), which needs no comma.

Compound Sentences

A compound sentence joins two independent clauses: "The team tested the bridge, **but** one support cracked." Each side can stand alone, so a comma appears before the conjunction. The Coach chooses the conjunction by meaning — *and* adds, *but/yet* contrasts, *or* offers a choice, *so* shows a result. Correct punctuation cannot rescue a conjunction that expresses the wrong relationship.

Avoid the "and" chain. Beginning writers join every idea with *and*. Highlight each *and* in a paragraph and label its job — compound subject, compound predicate, compound sentence, list, or unnecessary chain — then combine, separate, or choose a more precise relationship.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach

What equal parts are being joined, and which conjunction expresses their relationship?

Cheerleader

Take the sentence apart, identify the two teams, and reconnect them correctly.

Referee

Check whether the conjunction joins subjects, predicates, items, or complete clauses — and punctuate accordingly.

Fans

Show us whether ideas add, contrast, offer a choice, or create a result.

Transfer to the WCR: conjunctions help WCR writers connect reasons, evidence, and conclusions. A compound sentence can show contrast between two characters or cause and result — but avoid chaining every explanation with *and*.

Teacher Script — Name the Job First

SAY

"Circle the coordinating conjunctions. For each one, bracket the two parts it joins — are they subjects, predicates, items, or two complete clauses?"

SAY

"If both sides could stand alone as sentences, we put a comma before the conjunction. If not, we usually don't. Let's test both sides."

► *Use sentence cards students physically join — one color for subjects, another for predicates, another for independent clauses — so punctuation decisions become visible.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine

1

Circle coordinating conjunctions in a paragraph.

2

Bracket what each conjunction joins.

3

Check agreement and the meaning of the connection.

4

Correct punctuation or revise the conjunction as needed.

Locker Room Reflection

- Can students identify what a conjunction joins?
- Do they overuse *and* as a universal connector?
- How can conjunction instruction strengthen logical relationships in WCRs?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Use sentence cards that students physically join — one color for subjects, another for predicates, another for independent clauses. The visual structure makes punctuation decisions far clearer than a rule list.

FINISH STRONG

Conjunctions are team builders. Athletic Writers use them to connect equal parts with the right relationship, agreement, and punctuation.

Capitalization Rules

Official titles, holidays, and geographical names and places.

BIG IDEA

Capital letters signal specific names and official importance — they help the Fans recognize what is general and what is particular.

☉ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(D)(xxii) official titles; **(xxiii)** holidays; **(xxiv)** geographical names; **(xxv)** geographical places.

GRADE 4

4.11(D) — capitalization of proper nouns extended across authors, events, and titles.

GRADE 5

5.11(D) — consistent capitalization of proper names in a full researched composition.

ELPS: c.5(D) — editing writing for standard conventions, including capitalization.

Uniform numbers, names, and titles help spectators identify specific players and roles. Capital letters do the same work in writing: they distinguish a general mayor from **Mayor Lopez**, a river from the **Rio Grande**, and a holiday from **Thanksgiving**. Capitalization is not about circling important-sounding words — the Referee examines the noun's **job and specificity**.

Official Titles of People

Official titles are capitalized when used as part of, or in place of, a specific name: **Principal Garcia**, **Dr. Kim**, **Senator Patel**. A general description stays lowercase: *the principal*, *the doctor*, *the senator*.

Geographical Names, Places & the Meaning Test

Specific continents, countries, states, cities, rivers, mountains, oceans, parks, and regions are capitalized: **North America, Texas, Houston, Colorado River, Gulf of Mexico**. General words stay lowercase when not part of a proper name: *the city, a river, the park*. Capitalization can change specificity — "we visited the capitol" names a type of building, while "we visited the **Texas State Capitol**" names one specific place.

Before → After: "Dear principal garcia, our class visited the texas state capitol during spring break"
→ "Dear **Principal Garcia**, our class visited the **Texas State Capitol** during spring break."
Encourage students to verify unfamiliar official names in reliable sources rather than guessing.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach

Do the Fans need a general category or the exact official name?

Cheerleader

You can verify names — strong writers use resources instead of guessing.

Referee

Check official titles, holidays, and specific geographical names and places for capitals.

Fans

Capital letters help us recognize exactly which person, event, or place you mean.

Transfer to the WCR: WCRs may name authors, characters, historical events, locations, or text titles. Capitalize specific proper names consistently — and avoid random capitals on important-sounding common nouns.

Teacher Script — Name the Job First

SAY

"Scan for names of people, holidays, and places. For each one, ask: is this a general category, or a specific official name?"

SAY

"Capitalize the whole proper name. If you aren't sure of an official name, we verify it in the text or an approved source — we don't guess."

► Teach through contrasts: *principal* vs. **Principal Garcia**, *river* vs. **Brazos River**, *holiday* vs. **Veterans Day**. Use maps to find proper names and move them into sentences.

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine

1

Scan the draft for names of people, holidays, and places.

2

Ask whether each word is general or a specific official name.

3

Apply capitals to the complete proper name.

4

Verify unfamiliar names in the text or an approved source.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do students capitalize based on importance, or based on proper naming?
- Which geographical categories need more map-based practice?
- How can correspondence provide authentic title-capitalization practice?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Teach capitalization through contrasts — *principal* vs. **Principal Garcia**, *river* vs. **Brazos River**, *holiday* vs. **Veterans Day**. The contrast reveals the rule far more clearly than a list of capitalized words.

FINISH STRONG

Capitalization is a recognition system. It tells the Fans when a title, holiday, geographical name, or place belongs to one specific and official identity.

Punctuation Whistles

Apostrophes and commas that guide the reader.

BIG IDEA

Punctuation is not decoration. It signals missing letters, ownership, separation, and relationships so the Fans can process the sentence correctly.

☉ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(D)(xxvi) apostrophes in contractions; **(xxvii)** in possessives; **(xxviii)** commas in compound sentences; **(xxix)** commas in a series.

GRADE 4

4.11(D) — apostrophes and commas extended to more complex sentences and lists.

GRADE 5

5.11(D) — punctuation controlled for clarity across a full composition.

ELPS: c.5(D) — editing for standard punctuation conventions.

A referee's whistle signals when action should stop, pause, or reset. Punctuation gives readers the same signals. Students often place marks by sound alone, or scatter commas where they pause while speaking — the Referee must connect each mark to a specific **structural job**.

Apostrophes — Omission vs. Ownership

A contraction marks omitted letters: *do not* → **don't**, *we are* → **we're**, *it is* → **it's**. Have students write the two words above the contraction and cross out the missing letters. A possessive apostrophe shows ownership. And apostrophes **do not make regular plurals** — "three book's" wrongly signals possession where only number is meant.

Commas — Compound Sentences & Series

When two independent clauses are joined by a coordinating conjunction, the expected pattern places a comma before the conjunction: "The wind increased, **so** the team lowered the flag." Test both sides for complete thoughts — don't insert a comma merely because *and* or *but* appears. Commas also separate three or more items in a series: "We packed water, maps, **and** flashlights." Bracket each item and confirm the commas separate the units cleanly.

Before → After: "The teams robot didnt move but the students didnt quit" → "The **team's** robot **didn't** move, **but** the students **didn't** quit." One sentence, four different punctuation jobs — each named before it is placed.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach

Choose a contraction, possessive, compound sentence, or series only when it serves the message.

Cheerleader

Don't guess at every mark — identify the punctuation job first.

Referee

Name the rule: missing letters, ownership, two complete clauses, or three or more items.

Fans

Use punctuation signals that help us read the structure you intended.

Transfer to the WCR: check punctuation *after* reasoning is developed. During the Referee pass, students search specifically for apostrophes and comma-conjunction patterns rather than trying to catch every mark at once.

Teacher Script — Name the Job First

SAY

"For each apostrophe, tell me its job — is it marking missing letters, or showing ownership? Write the two words above a contraction and cross out what's missing."

SAY

"Before a comma, name the rule: two complete clauses joined by a conjunction, or three or more items in a series. If it's neither, we don't need the comma."

► Have students write a tiny rule label above each corrected mark — C for contraction, P for possession, CS for compound sentence, S for series. Naming the reason reduces random punctuation.

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine

1

Scan for contractions and write the original words above each one.

2

Scan for possession and identify whether the owner is singular or plural.

3

Circle coordinating conjunctions and test for complete clauses.

4

Bracket series items and verify comma separation.

Locker Room Reflection

- Which apostrophe confusion appears most often?
- Can students tell conjunctions joining clauses from those joining words or predicates?
- How can focused punctuation passes replace vague proofreading?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Have students write a tiny rule label above a corrected mark — C for contraction, P for possession, CS for compound sentence, S for series. Naming the reason is what reduces random punctuation.

FINISH STRONG

Punctuation whistles are effective only when they signal a real structural job. Athletic Writers know why the mark belongs before they place it.

Spelling Fundamentals

Orthographic patterns, rules, and high-frequency words in authentic writing.

BIG IDEA

Spelling accuracy grows when writers use sound, pattern, meaning, memory, and resources together.

☉ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(D)(xxx) orthographic patterns; **(xxxi)** orthographic rules; **(xxxii)** grade-appropriate high-frequency words.

GRADE 4

4.11(D) — morphology and syllable patterns applied to longer academic words.

GRADE 5

5.11(D) — spelling of grade-level and content vocabulary sustained across a composition.

ELPS: c.5(C) — spelling English words with increasing accuracy in writing.

Athletes return to fundamentals throughout their careers because automatic basics protect performance under pressure. Writers need the same relationship with spelling. When every word requires a guess, transcription consumes working memory and **endurance falls**. When common patterns and high-frequency words become automatic, the writer can devote greater attention to ideas and craft.

Pattern Knowledge

Orthographic patterns include common ways sounds, syllables, vowel teams, endings, and word families work. When a student misspells a word, ask what **sound, pattern, syllable, base word, or affix** can help — the analysis builds transferable knowledge rather than a one-time fix.

High-Frequency Words & Drafting Without Paralysis

High-frequency words appear repeatedly and should become increasingly automatic through repeated reading, writing, retrieval, and correction in meaningful contexts. Keep a **personal** high-frequency list built from each writer's actual errors, not an endless dictionary. During drafting, a student can attempt the word, circle it lightly, use a placeholder, or consult an approved resource — preserving the idea without ignoring spelling growth.

The editing sequence for a circled word: say it → segment it → identify syllables and morphemes → compare a known pattern → use a resource → record the corrected form. The Coach keeps drafting moving; the Referee returns during editing to *analyze* uncertain words, not simply mark them wrong.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach

Keep the idea moving. Attempt the word and mark it for a later check if needed.

Cheerleader

An uncertain spelling does not mean you must abandon the sentence.

Referee

Use sound, pattern, rule, meaning parts, and resources to verify the word.

Fans

Accurate spelling helps us recognize words quickly and stay focused on the message.

Transfer to the WCR: a timed WCR requires balance — don't stop reasoning for every uncertain word, but do spell high-frequency words accurately and use quick pattern or resource strategies for key academic vocabulary. A final circled-word pass targets likely errors.

Teacher Script — Name the Job First

SAY

"If a word is hard while drafting, attempt it, circle it lightly, and keep your idea moving. We'll come back to it."

SAY

"At editing, for each circled word: say it, break it into syllables and meaning parts, compare a pattern you know, then check a resource and write the correct form."

► *Don't correct every spelling error for the student. Select errors that connect to taught patterns, rules, morphemes, or high-frequency words and require the writer to participate in the analysis.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Training Routine

1

During drafting, attempt and lightly mark uncertain spellings.

2

During editing, analyze each marked word through sound, syllable, pattern, and meaning.

3

Verify with an approved source when needed.

4

Add repeated errors to a personal word or pattern list for future practice.

Locker Room Reflection

- Which orthographic patterns are not transferring into authentic writing?
- How can personal word lists remain small and useful?
- What drafting routine keeps spelling uncertainty from stopping idea generation?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Don't correct every spelling error for the student. Select errors that connect to taught patterns, rules, morphemes, or high-frequency words, and require the writer to participate in the analysis. Correction without thinking does not build the spelling system.

FINISH STRONG

Spelling fundamentals free the writer's endurance. When patterns and high-frequency words become automatic, attention returns to ideas — where the real writing happens.

PART SIX

6

The Genre Games

31 · Personal Narrative: Tell the Game Story

32 · Poetry: Precision Performance

33 · Informational Writing: Become the Expert

34 · Opinion Writing & the Written Constructed Response

35 · Correspondence: Write to a Real Person

Personal Narrative: Tell the Game Story

Using genre characteristics and craft to make an experience meaningful.

BIG IDEA

A personal narrative is not a list of everything that happened — it is one selected experience, shaped so the Fans can live through its meaning.

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GRADE 3

3.12(A)(i) personal narratives using genre characteristics; **(ii)** using craft; applies the recursive process in **3.11**.

GRADE 4

4.12(A) — personal narratives with a developed arc and purposeful craft.

GRADE 5

5.12(A) — narratives sustained with control of pacing, detail, and reflection.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — narrating and describing an experience in writing with specificity and detail.

Athletes tell stories about the play that changed the game, the practice that tested the team, or the moment they learned something about themselves. A strong personal narrative centers on **one meaningful experience** rather than reporting a whole day from waking to bedtime. The Athletic Writer selects a manageable moment, establishes the situation, sequences events, develops people and actions, uses craft to create experience, and closes with outcome or reflection — remaining truthful while shaping the story for effect.

Choose a Small, Meaningful Moment

Broad topics like "my vacation" or "my birthday" produce lists. Narrowing to "the moment I lost the trail" or "when the cake collapsed" creates space for development. The Coach asks where the tension, change, surprise, or learning actually occurs.

Build the Narrative Arc

A narrative needs orientation, an unfolding sequence, and an ending. Students plan what the narrator wanted, what happened, what problem or change occurred, and what they understood afterward. Chronological order usually supports the genre, though a brief reflection or flashback is fine if the Fans can follow it.

Craft Creates Experience

Craft may include dialogue, sensory detail, precise verbs, internal thinking, description, pacing, and comparison. The purpose is not to add every device — the writer selects details that let the Fans experience the moment. **Slow down the most important part;** a page of setup followed by one rushed sentence about the central event creates weak emphasis.

End With Meaning

The ending may show the outcome, an emotional change, a realization, or a connection back to the opening. Avoid attaching a generic lesson the events do not support — the Fans should understand why *this* memory was worth telling.

Try It With Students — Before & After Training

Before Training	After Training
<i>We went camping. We ate. We hiked. It rained. We went home. It was fun.</i>	The first drop hit my map as we reached the farthest point on the trail. Within seconds, rain blurred the path markers, and my family had to decide whether to keep going or turn back.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach

Which moment matters most, and which actions, thoughts, dialogue, and details will let the Fans experience it?

Cheerleader

Your memory does not need to be dramatic to be meaningful. Tell the true moment carefully.

Referee

Keep verb tense, sentence boundaries, names, dialogue punctuation, and sequence clear.

Fans

Place us inside the moment — and show why it mattered to you.

Teacher Script

SAY

"We're going to zoom in. Instead of the whole trip, pick the one moment with the strongest feeling, problem, or change — that's our scene."

SAY

"Now slow it down: what did you see, hear, think, and do right then? Give us the moment second by second."

- ▶ *Create a timeline of the broad event, then circle the moment with the strongest feeling, problem, or change.*
- ▶ *Zoom into that moment with action, thought, and sensory detail; draft an ending that reveals why it stayed with the narrator.*
- ▶ *Use a "camera lens" gesture — wide lens = broad summary, zoom lens = developed scene — to show where the narrative should zoom and where it can move quickly.*

" " = say word-for-word • ▶ = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Transfer to the WCR: narrative skill strengthens text-based responses when students explain events precisely and identify how a character changes. But a WCR must not become an invented story — students stay grounded in the provided text and prompt.

Training Routine

1

List three possible personal moments and choose the smallest meaningful one.

2

Map beginning context, central event, response, and outcome or reflection.

3

Draft the central moment with selected craft details.

4

Revise pacing so the most important moment receives the greatest attention.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do students choose moments, or broad topics?
- Which craft moves are purposeful rather than decorative?
- Does the ending grow naturally from the experience?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Tip. Use a "camera lens" gesture. Wide lens means broad summary; zoom lens means a developed scene. Ask students where the narrative should zoom and where it can move quickly.

FINISH STRONG

A personal narrative becomes powerful when the writer selects one meaningful performance from life, slows down the important moment, and shares the understanding that remained afterward.

Poetry: Precision Performance

Using genre characteristics and craft to create concentrated meaning.

BIG IDEA

Poetry trains writers to make every word, sound, image, and line carry purposeful weight.

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GRADE 3

3.12(A)(iii) poetry using genre characteristics; **(iv)** using craft; applies planning, revision, word choice, and publication in **3.11**.

GRADE 4

4.12(A) — poetry with deliberate structure, sound, and figurative craft.

GRADE 5

5.12(A) — poetry sustaining image and tone across a full piece.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(F) — using descriptive and figurative language with increasing precision in writing.

A gymnast may complete an entire routine in a short space, but every movement carries precision. Poetry works the same way — a poem can be brief while demanding intense decisions about image, sound, rhythm, line, comparison, and emotional effect. Young writers sometimes believe a poem must rhyme, or that any group of short lines is poetry. The Athletic Writer explores multiple poetic possibilities and uses craft to **concentrate meaning** rather than forcing a single formula.

Begin With an Image, Feeling, or Observation

Strong poems grow from close observation. Students study an object, memory, sound, movement, or emotion and record sensory details before deciding on line form or rhyme. The planning question: "What do I want the Fans to notice or feel differently after this poem?"

Line and Sound Choices

Line breaks control pause, emphasis, and visual shape; repetition can create rhythm and focus. Reading a draft aloud reveals where a line should break and where a sound should land.

Figurative and Sensory Craft

Simile, metaphor, personification, and sensory language let readers experience an idea from a fresh angle — a storm may "stomp across the roof," or the moon may look "like a silver coin caught in branches." The Coach checks whether the comparison **reveals meaning** rather than adding unrelated decoration.

Revision Through Precision

Poetry is the ideal place to teach deletion and word choice. Writers remove filler, replace a general verb, rearrange lines, or test where a repeated phrase belongs. If the Fans can name the image or line that stays after the poem ends, the craft created impact.

Try It With Students — Before & After Training

Before Training	After Training
<i>The rain was loud. It rained on the roof. I woke up.</i>	Rain drummed / on the metal roof, / a thousand small fingers / tapping morning awake.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach What image, sound, line, or comparison will carry the meaning most precisely?	Cheerleader Poetry does not have to rhyme or explain everything. Take a creative risk.
Referee Check spelling and punctuation choices while respecting intentional poetic decisions.	Fans Give us an image, sound, or feeling that stays after the final line.

Teacher Script

- SAY
"Say the plain sentence first — 'the rain was loud.' Now, what did it actually sound like? Give me the exact sound and motion."
- SAY
"Read your draft out loud. Where does a line want to break? Where should a word land alone?"

- Identify the plain statement and the sensory experience behind it; generate precise sounds and actions.
- Create one strong comparison, then choose line breaks by reading aloud.
- Do not assess every poem by the same feature list — a quiet free-verse poem and a playful rhyming poem can both show strong genre control.

" " = say word-for-word · ▸ = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Transfer to the WCR: poetic craft sharpens sensitivity to word choice, imagery, tone, and figurative meaning — skills that transfer when students analyze and explain how an author's language contributes to meaning in a written response.

Training Routine

1

Observe one subject and collect sensory words and images.

2

Choose the central feeling or idea.

3

Draft with purposeful line, sound, and comparison choices.

4

Revise by deleting filler and strengthening the most important words.

Locker Room Reflection

- Do students believe rhyme is required?
- How can reading aloud improve poetic revision?
- Which craft choices create meaning rather than merely decorate?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Tip. Do not assess every poem by the same feature list. Ask whether the craft choices serve the poem's purpose — a quiet free-verse poem and a playful rhyming poem may both demonstrate strong genre control.

FINISH STRONG

Poetry is concentrated athletic writing. Every line trains precision, every sound shapes experience, and every chosen word must earn its place.

Informational Writing: Become the Expert

Explaining a topic with a clear central idea, genre characteristics, and craft.

BIG IDEA

Informational writers organize accurate knowledge so the Fans understand a topic more clearly than they did before.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.12(B)(i) informational texts with a clear central idea; **(ii)** genre characteristics; **(iii)** craft.

GRADE 4

4.12(B) — informational texts with organized structure and developed evidence.

GRADE 5

5.12(B) — informational compositions with controlling idea sustained across sources.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — explaining information in writing with increasing specificity and accuracy.

An expert is not simply someone who knows facts. An expert selects what matters, organizes it, defines unfamiliar terms, explains relationships, and adjusts the message for the audience. Informational writing trains students to perform those expert behaviors. A strong composition has a **clear central idea** — not a pile of disconnected facts — developed with headings, categories, definitions, examples, processes, comparisons, cause and effect, domain vocabulary, and a conclusion that reinforces importance.

Build Around a Clear Central Idea

The topic names the subject; the central idea states what the writer wants the Fans to understand about it. "Volcanoes" is a topic. "Volcanoes change Earth's surface by releasing lava, ash, and gases" is a central idea.

Organize Information Purposefully

Structures include description, sequence or process, cause and effect, problem and solution, and compare and contrast. Writers may combine them, but each section needs a clear purpose. A planning map should show categories or relationships — not just a list of facts in the order they were found.

Use Accurate Evidence and DEEP FACTS

Students develop the topic with definitions, examples, expert information from sources, processes, facts, comparisons, causes, and brief anecdotes — the **DEEP FACTS** explanation moves. Source information must stay accurate and be expressed in the student's own words unless a short quotation is intentional; teach note-taking with keywords and paraphrasing so students do not copy whole sentences.

Informational Craft

Craft includes precise vocabulary, clear analogies, purposeful headings, diagrams when appropriate, strong examples, and sentence structures that show relationships. Informational does not mean dull — the Fans voice helps decide what needs a definition and which example will make the concept concrete.

Try It With Students — Before & After Training

Before Training	After Training
<i>Bees fly. Bees make honey. Bees visit flowers. They live in hives. Bees are insects.</i>	Honeybees help flowering plants reproduce by carrying pollen from flower to flower. As a bee gathers nectar, pollen sticks to its body and moves to the next bloom. This process, called pollination, supports many plants that people and animals use for food.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach State the central idea, choose a logical structure, and select accurate details that develop it.	Cheerleader You do not need to know everything. Explain the important information you can support.
Referee Check facts against the source, spell domain words carefully, and keep relationships clear.	Fans Help us leave understanding the topic more clearly than we did before.

Teacher Script

SAY

"What's the topic — and what important understanding connects all these facts? That connection is our central idea."

SAY

"Group the facts under a structure — process, or cause and effect — and add a definition that helps the Fans understand the science."

- *Identify the topic and write a central idea that expresses the connection among the facts.*
- *Group facts under a process or cause-and-effect structure; add a definition and explanation (DEEP FACTS).*
- *Have students distinguish what they knew before reading from what the source actually says — this keeps confident-but-unsupported information out of source-based writing.*

" " = say word-for-word · ▸ = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Transfer to the WCR: many WCRs are short informational explanations based on sources — students need a clear controlling idea, accurate evidence, paraphrasing, explanation, and organized relationships. **DEEP FACTS** can expand the explanation without drifting from the text.

Training Routine

1

Write the topic and a complete central idea.

2

Sort notes into a purposeful informational structure.

3

Select relevant source-based details and one or more DEEP FACTS.

4

Draft, revise for clarity, verify accuracy, and publish for the intended Fans.

Locker Room Reflection

- Can students state a central idea rather than only a topic?
- Which informational structures have they practiced?
- How will note-taking instruction reduce copying?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Tip. Ask students to distinguish what they knew before reading from what the source actually says. This prevents confident but unsupported information from entering source-based informational writing.

FINISH STRONG

Informational Athletic Writers do more than collect facts. They organize knowledge, explain relationships, and help the Fans leave with a clearer understanding.

Opinion Writing & the Written Constructed Response

Make the case with TREES — evidence, explanation, and significant inferencing.

BIG IDEA

A strong opinion or text-based response does not merely state a belief; it builds a visible line of reasoning the Fans can follow and evaluate.

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GRADE 3

3.12(C)(i) opinion essays using genre characteristics; **(ii)** using craft; applies **3.11(A–E)** throughout the process.

GRADE 4

4.12(C) — argument/opinion with organized reasons and text evidence.

GRADE 5

5.12(C) — argument sustained with evidence, explanation, and inference across texts.

ELPS: c.5(B), c.5(E) & c.5(G) — expressing and supporting opinions in writing with increasingly complex structures.

Opinion writing is sometimes reduced to preferences: "I like recess because it is fun." Athletic Writers move from preference to **position** — a clear claim, organized reasons, relevant evidence, an explained connection, an addressed audience, and a meaningful conclusion. The same reasoning habits support a written constructed response, where the writer must transform reading evidence into organized written reasoning. **TREES** provides the playbook.

T

Thesis. Directly answer the prompt or state the position — specific enough to guide the response, broad enough to include the evidence to come.

R

Reasons or Ways. Why the position is valid; in a text response, *ways* identify how a character, event, structure, or idea demonstrates the thesis.

E

Evidence. Concrete support from the source or experience. Choose evidence because it proves the thesis — not because it is easy to copy. Paraphrase when possible; quote briefly when useful.

E

Explanation with DEEP FACTS. The bridge between evidence and thesis — "How does this evidence prove my point?" Often the missing part. "This shows" helps only when real explanation follows.

S

Significant Inferencing. Move beyond restating evidence to a larger conclusion, implication, pattern, or lesson the reasoning supports. The inference must grow from the evidence — a dramatic but unsupported statement is disconnected, not significant.

The order of play matters. Evidence without explanation is unfinished reasoning, and the Fans should never be expected to complete the reasoning silently. Invite the Referee only *after* the reasoning is complete.

Try It With Students — Before & After Training

Before Training	After Training
<i>Maya is persevering. The text says her model fell apart. She tried again.</i>	Maya demonstrates perseverance because she keeps improving the model after it collapses. The text explains that she studies the broken supports and rebuilds the base instead of abandoning the project. This shows that Maya does more than repeat the same attempt — she learns from the failure and changes her method. Her actions reveal that perseverance includes both continued effort and thoughtful adjustment.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach

State a thesis that answers the prompt, choose the strongest evidence, and explain the connection.

Cheerleader

You can build this step by step. A clear claim and one well-explained piece of evidence beats a pile of quotes.

Referee

Check quotation and citation, verb tense, and sentence boundaries — but only after the reasoning is complete.

Fans

Let us trace your thinking from claim to evidence to conclusion without gaps.

Teacher Script

SAY

"Underline your thesis. Does it actually answer the prompt? Now box your evidence and ask out loud: why does this prove my point?"

SAY

"Write the explanation as a new sentence — don't just attach 'this shows.' Then add one inference that grows from what you proved."

- ▶ *Underline the thesis and verify it answers the prompt; box the evidence and ask "why does this prove it?"*
- ▶ *Write the explanation in a new sentence rather than a vague "this shows"; add a significant inference grounded in the evidence.*
- ▶ *During feedback, name the exact TREES component that is strong or missing so the student knows the next training target.*

" " = say word-for-word • ▶ = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Transfer to the WCR: this chapter is the central WCR application. Use the model in Appendix C to demonstrate the complete process with two texts. Students practice each TREES component separately, then combine them under timed and untimed conditions — still using the four internal voices.

Training Routine

1

Analyze the prompt and write a direct thesis.

2

Select evidence that proves the thesis; paraphrase or quote briefly.

3

Explain each piece with a real sentence (DEEP FACTS as needed).

4

Add significant inferencing, revise for coherence, then a focused Referee pass.

Locker Room Reflection

- Can students distinguish evidence from explanation?
- Does significant inferencing remain grounded in the text?
- Which of the four voices disappears most often during independent WCR writing?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Tip. Do not score a response only by whether evidence appears — evidence without explanation is unfinished reasoning. In feedback, identify the exact TREES component that is strong or missing so the student knows the next training target.

FINISH STRONG

The Athletic Writer makes a case the Fans can trace. TREES gives the response structure, evidence gives it support, explanation gives it logic, and significant inferencing gives it depth.

Correspondence: Write to a Real Person

Thank-you notes and letters with authentic purpose and audience.

BIG IDEA

Correspondence makes audience visible — every word is directed to a real recipient with a real reason for reading.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.12(D)(i) correspondence such as thank-you notes or letters; applies planning for purpose/audience in **3.11(A)** and publication in **3.11(E)**.

GRADE 4

4.12(D) — correspondence with clear purpose, tone, and conventions for the recipient.

GRADE 5

5.12(D) — correspondence adapting tone and structure to audience and purpose.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — writing for a specific audience and purpose with appropriate tone and conventions.

A letter places the Fans directly in front of the writer. The recipient has a name, a relationship, existing knowledge, and a reason to care — which makes correspondence a powerful setting for teaching purpose, tone, organization, conventions, and authentic publication. Third-grade writers can compose thank-you notes, friendly letters, invitations, requests, questions to experts, and letters that share information or opinion — each with the expected features while sounding right for the specific recipient.

Purpose and Recipient

Before drafting, students state **why** they are writing and what they want the recipient to know, feel, or do. A thank-you note names the action or gift and explains its effect; a request is respectful, specific, and supported. The Coach asks, "Why will this person open the letter, and what should they carry away?"

Correspondence Structure

Letters commonly include the date when appropriate, greeting, body, closing, and signature. The body still needs focus and development. A format template can reduce cognitive load, but the message must remain the student's own — and digital correspondence may use different formatting while keeping the same needs for audience, clarity, tone, and conventions.

Tone and Specificity

Tone changes with relationship and purpose — a note to a friend differs from a request to the principal. Respectful does not mean vague: "Thank you for showing our class how the fire truck ladder works" is far stronger than "Thank you for everything." Specific details make appreciation credible.

Publishing and Delivery

Correspondence becomes complete when it **reaches** its audience — hand-delivered, mailed through school procedures, shared through approved digital systems, or presented as a class letter. The Referee checks names, titles, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, greeting, closing, and legibility before delivery.

Try It With Students — Before & After Training

Before Training	After Training
<i>Dear Ms. Lee, Thank you for coming. It was fun. From, Sam</i>	Dear Ms. Lee, Thank you for bringing the weather tools to our class. Using the anemometer helped me understand how wind speed can be measured instead of only described. I appreciate the time you spent answering our questions. Sincerely, Sam

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach What is the purpose, what does this person need to know, and what tone fits the relationship?	Cheerleader Your sincere message matters even if it is brief. Make it specific and complete.
Referee Check the recipient's name, official title, greeting, closing, punctuation, spelling, and legibility.	Fans Speak to us as the real reader we are — say exactly what you mean us to know.

Teacher Script

SAY
"Name your reader and the exact thing you're thanking them for. Not 'everything' — the one specific action."

SAY
"Add one sentence about the effect it had on you. Then choose a closing that fits how well you know them."

► *Identify the recipient and the exact action being acknowledged; add one specific detail about its effect on the writer.*

► *Choose a tone and closing appropriate to the relationship; run the Referee pass before delivery.*

► *Whenever possible, actually send the correspondence — authentic delivery changes student effort and reinforces that writing is communication.*

" " = say word-for-word • ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Transfer to the WCR: correspondence is not usually a WCR format, but it strengthens audience awareness, concise purpose, clear explanation, and appropriate conventions — habits that transfer directly into text-based writing.

Training Routine

1

Name the recipient, purpose, and desired effect.

2

Plan the greeting, focused body, and closing.

3

Draft with specific details and appropriate tone.

4

Edit, publish, and deliver the message to the real recipient.

Locker Room Reflection

- ➡ Which real audiences can students write to this year?
- ➡ Do thank-you notes explain the effect of the recipient's action?
- ➡ How can correspondence strengthen titles, capitalization, punctuation, and tone?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Tip. Whenever possible, send the correspondence. Authentic delivery changes student effort and reinforces that writing is communication, not merely paper production.

FINISH STRONG

Correspondence places writing into relationship. The Athletic Writer plans for a real person, shapes a purposeful message, checks it carefully, and sends words into the world.

PART SEVEN

7

Championship Writing

36 · The Fourth Quarter Writer • 37 · The Writing Brain Gym
38 · Writing Recovery • 39 · The Writing Olympics
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The Fourth Quarter Writer

Thinking and composing when the writing brain is tired.

BIG IDEA

Championship writers do not save their weakest thinking for the end — they use recovery to preserve purpose, explanation, and correctness in the fourth quarter.

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GRADE 3

Supports sustained use of **3.11(B–E)** — development, revision, editing, publication; trains focus and recovery late in an independent WCR.

GRADE 4

Supports **4.11(B–E)** — sustaining development and revision across a longer composition.

GRADE 5

Supports **5.11(B–E)** — maintaining reasoning and control under a full-length task.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — sustaining written expression and explanation across an extended task.

The final part of a game exposes conditioning. Early energy is gone, pressure has increased, and every decision feels heavier. Writing has a fourth quarter too — it begins when the easy ideas are used up, the hand is tired, time feels short, and the writer is tempted to rush the explanation, skip revision, or end without checking. The Fourth Quarter Writer **expects** this moment: fatigue is not a signal to abandon thinking — it is a signal to reduce the task, reset attention, consult the plan, and use the correct voice.

Recognize the Signs of Writing Fatigue

Fatigue may appear as repeated ideas, shrinking handwriting, vague pronouns, or shorter explanations. Use visible pacing checkpoints rather than a countdown that creates panic — by this point, complete the plan; by the next, develop evidence; reserve the final minutes for the Coach and Referee passes.

Recovery Under Time Pressure

A fourth-quarter reset can take less than thirty seconds: stop, relax the grip, take one slow breath, reread the prompt and last complete sentence, identify the next TREES component, and continue. The reset prevents several minutes of unproductive staring or drifting — and students should practice it during ordinary classroom writing before they need it during testing.

Finish the Thinking

Fourth-quarter writers distinguish a complete *page* from complete *reasoning*. They check whether the evidence is explained, whether the conclusion finishes the purpose, and whether the Fans can follow the final section. The Cheerleader supports persistence, but the Coach defines the exact finish: "Keep going" becomes "Write the explanation that connects this evidence to your thesis."

Try It With Students — Before & After Training

Before Training	After Training
<i>The text says, "Nia returned to the library every day." This is my evidence. The end.</i>	The text explains that Nia returned to the library every day. This repeated action shows determination because she kept researching even after the first books did not answer her question. Her behavior suggests that persistence includes searching for a new path when the first attempt is unsuccessful.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach Which unfinished component matters most right now — explanation, inference, conclusion, revision, or editing?	Cheerleader Your brain is tired, but the next move is small. Finish one meaningful rep.
Referee Run a focused final check — sentence boundaries and punctuation — not a vague scan of everything.	Fans Don't let the final section lose us — keep the ending as clear as the beginning.

Teacher Script

SAY

"Your brain is tired — that's the fourth quarter. We don't stop thinking here; we make the next move small. What's the one unfinished piece that matters most?"

SAY

"Take one breath, reread your thesis and last evidence, and write the single explanation sentence that connects them."

- ▶ *Name the missing component rather than saying only "write more."*
- ▶ *Have the student take one breath and reread the thesis and evidence, then prompt one explanation sentence and one inference sentence.*
- ▶ *Use the remaining time for a focused sentence and punctuation check — not a full rewrite.*

" " = say word-for-word • ▶ = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Transfer to the WCR: WCR practice should include late-task reasoning drills. Place an evidence-explanation task after a sustained reading and writing period so students learn to preserve inference and clarity under realistic cognitive fatigue.

Training Routine

1

Notice and name the type of fatigue.

2

Complete a brief physical and attention reset.

3

Identify the single highest-value unfinished writing move.

4

Finish that move, then use the remaining time for a focused Referee pass.

Locker Room Reflection

- ➡ Which writing quality declines first when my students tire?
- ➡ Have students practiced a recovery routine under mild time pressure?
- ➡ What should the final three minutes of a WCR look and sound like?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Tip. Avoid telling students only to "use all your time." Teach them how to spend the final minutes — name the highest-value unfinished move, complete it, then run a focused check — so effort turns into finished reasoning.

FINISH STRONG

The Fourth Quarter Writer expects fatigue, protects the most important thinking, and uses recovery to finish with purpose instead of surrendering to the clock.

The Writing Brain Gym

Quick cognitive conditioning routines for daily writing strength.

BIG IDEA

Short, consistent cognitive reps strengthen the component skills that make sustained composition possible.

☉ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

Supports fluency and independence across **3.11** and **3.12** through brief, repeated practice; can target any TEKS breakout as a warm-up, drill, or recovery routine.

GRADE 4

Supports **4.11** / **4.12** component fluency through short daily reps.

GRADE 5

Supports **5.11** / **5.12** automaticity so energy is reserved for full composition.

ELPS: c.5(B), c.5(E) & c.5(F) — building fluency with grammatical structures and academic language through repeated practice.

Athletes do not wait for the full game to practice every skill — they use short drills to build coordination, automaticity, reaction, and control. Writers benefit from brief routines that isolate one mental or language demand before it must operate inside a complete composition. The Writing Brain Gym is not busywork: each routine should have a **named muscle**, a **clear voice**, and a **transfer point**. A two-minute sentence-combining drill matters because students will later revise a paragraph; a one-minute thesis drill matters because students will later enter a WCR with direction.

Planning Sprints

Give students a prompt and sixty seconds to identify genre, topic, purpose, and Fans. In a second minute, they create a keyword plan — direction before drafting.

Elaboration Bursts

Provide one broad statement and ask students to add a definition, example, process, cause, comparison, or anecdote — a sixty-second **DEEP FACT burst** that trains flexible development. Students can compare two elaboration choices and explain which better serves the Fans.

Recovery and Self-Talk Reps

Present a common obstacle — no opening, missing evidence, uncertain spelling, or fatigue — and have students name the voice and strategy needed. This rehearsal builds a response *before* the real obstacle appears. Finish with a ten-second Fans celebration: name one choice that became stronger through the rep.

Try It With Students — Before & After Training

Before Training	After Training
<i>Students immediately begin a long response and spend several minutes staring at the page.</i>	Minute 1: box the prompt's action and write a thesis. Minute 2: match one piece of evidence and draft an explanation sentence. Minute 3: add an inference and mark one convention to check.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach Name the muscle and the exact move this drill is training.	Cheerleader Short reps count. Consistency builds endurance even when the workout lasts only two minutes.
Referee Practice one rule accurately rather than scanning every rule vaguely.	Fans Show us how this quick drill will improve a real piece of writing.

Teacher Script

SAY

"Two minutes, one muscle. Today we train the thesis — box the prompt's action word and write one sentence that answers it."

SAY

"Now connect it: where will you use this exact move in the draft you're working on?"

- ▶ Give a prompt and sixty seconds to identify genre, topic, purpose, and Fans; add a second minute for a keyword plan.
- ▶ Run a sixty-second DEEP FACT elaboration burst from one broad statement, then compare two elaboration choices.
- ▶ Keep a Brain Gym rotation chart so drills stay balanced across planning, development, revision, conventions, genre, endurance, and audience.

" " = say word-for-word · ▶ = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Transfer to the WCR: use Brain Gym routines to overlearn the components of TREES — thesis writing, evidence matching, explanation sentences, inferencing, and focused editing — practiced separately before integrating them into a complete WCR.

Training Routine

1

Select one writing muscle connected to current instruction or observed need.

2

Design a one- to four-minute rep with a clear success criterion.

3

Name the leading voice and model the internal language.

4

Connect the rep immediately to a real draft or future writing event.

Locker Room Reflection

- ➡ Which writing skill would improve through two minutes of daily repetition?
- ➡ How will I keep Brain Gym practice connected to authentic composition?
- ➡ Are drills building accuracy, strategy, or both?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Tip. Keep a Brain Gym rotation chart so short drills stay balanced across planning, development, revision, conventions, genre, endurance, and audience. Repeating only editing drills can make students believe correctness is the whole of writing.

FINISH STRONG

The Writing Brain Gym builds strength in small doses. When the components become more automatic and strategic, the writer has more energy for the full performance.

Writing Recovery

How Athletic Writers restart after confusion, distraction, and writer's block.

BIG IDEA

Recovery is not separate from performance — it is the skill that lets performance continue after the plan, sentence, or focus breaks down.

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GRADE 3

Supports the recursive writing process in **3.11**; teaches fix-up strategies for independent planning, development, revision, editing, and publication.

GRADE 4

Supports **4.11** — independent recovery within a longer recursive process.

GRADE 5

Supports **5.11** — self-directed problem-solving across a full composition.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — sustaining and repairing written expression independently.

Every writer loses the thread sometimes — the sentence disappears before it reaches the page, the evidence no longer seems connected, the plan stops helping, or attention drifts toward something easier. The difference between a stalled writer and an Athletic Writer is not the absence of breakdown; it is the ability to **recognize the breakdown and select a recovery move**. Recovery should be taught explicitly, just like introductions or punctuation — students need a small playbook for idea loss, organization confusion, word-finding difficulty, emotional frustration, and attention drift.

Recover the Idea

When the idea disappears, reread the prompt and plan, say aloud what you are trying to explain, or return to the last clear point of meaning and rebuild from there.

Recover the Word or Sentence

If one word blocks the whole sentence, use a temporary placeholder, a known synonym, a word bank, or a quick resource check. If the sentence feels impossible, state it orally in simpler language and revise later. The Cheerleader protects momentum: "Do not sacrifice the whole idea to one uncertain word."

Recover Focus and Emotion

A focus reset may include relaxing the grip, moving the shoulders, taking one breath, rereading the last complete sentence, and stating the next move. Emotional recovery may require naming frustration without letting it define ability — the Referee notices the drift, the Cheerleader prevents shame, and the Coach supplies the restart.

Try It With Students — Before & After Training

Before Training	After Training
<i>The student writes one piece of evidence, loses the explanation, stops, stares, and starts drawing in the margin.</i>	The student rereads the prompt, locates the last completed TREES component, says the next explanation sentence aloud, writes it, and continues.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach Identify the breakdown — idea, order, word, sentence, focus, or emotion — then choose the matching recovery play.	Cheerleader Being stuck is a temporary condition. Use one strategy before deciding you cannot continue.
Referee Your eyes or pencil moved, but the purpose disappeared. Stop and reset to the last point of meaning.	Fans Return to the place where we became confused and rebuild the connection.

Teacher Script

SAY

"Being stuck is temporary. First, name what broke — is it the idea, a word, a sentence, your focus, or a feeling?"

SAY

"Now use the matching play: reread the prompt, say your next sentence out loud, and write it."

- ▶ *Have the student stop and identify the type of breakdown before trying a fix.*
- ▶ *Match the recovery tool to the breakdown — reread the prompt, say the sentence, check the plan, use a placeholder, or take one reset breath.*
- ▶ *Create a recovery menu students can access without asking permission — independence grows when help is visible and predictable.*

" " = say word-for-word • ▶ = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Transfer to the WCR: students should memorize a short WCR recovery sequence: reread the prompt, locate the last completed TREES component, select the next component, say the sentence, and write it. This sequence replaces helplessness with action.

Training Routine

1

Stop and identify the type of breakdown.

2

Use the matching recovery tool rather than a random strategy.

3

Restart with one complete and useful sentence or revision.

4

Record which recovery worked so it becomes an independent habit.

Locker Room Reflection

- ➡ Which types of writing breakdown occur most often?
- ➡ Do students know more than one recovery move?
- ➡ How can I praise recovery without interrupting renewed focus?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Tip. Create a recovery menu students can access without asking permission — "reread prompt," "say the sentence," "check the plan," "use a placeholder," "call a revision play," "take one reset breath." Independence grows when help is visible and predictable.

FINISH STRONG

Strong writers are not never-stuck writers. They are writers who can identify what broke, select a repair, and return to purposeful composition.

The Writing Olympics

Classroom challenges that celebrate craft, endurance, and teamwork.

BIG IDEA

Healthy competition should make growth visible, multiply practice, and celebrate diverse writing strengths — not rank children by a single score.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

Supports practice and transfer across all **3.11** and **3.12** expectations; provides repeated application without replacing full composition instruction.

GRADE 4

Supports **4.11** / **4.12** transfer through short, skill-specific events.

GRADE 5

Supports **5.11** / **5.12** application and collaboration alongside sustained writing.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — applying writing skills in varied, purposeful, collaborative contexts.

The Olympics celebrate many events because athletic excellence appears in different forms — a sprinter, diver, gymnast, and distance runner do not demonstrate the same strength. A Writing Olympics can honor the same diversity: planning, elaboration, sentence craft, conventions, revision, endurance, audience awareness, and genre performance. The purpose is not constant competition — it is short, joyful challenges that produce meaningful repetitions and a shared team culture. Students should primarily compete against a **previous performance** or work toward a **team goal**.

Design Events Around Writing Muscles

Events might include a Thesis Sprint, a Detail Decathlon, or a Revision Relay. Assign roles so one student does not dominate — planner, drafter, Fans representative, Referee — and rotate the roles across rounds.

Recognition Beyond Winning

Awards can honor strongest recovery, clearest explanation, most purposeful revision, best audience adaptation, greatest personal growth, and most supportive teammate. This protects students whose transcription speed or prior achievement differs — the Fans celebrate the process publicly while individual errors remain private.

Transfer Back to Real Writing

Every event should end with transfer: "Where will you use this move in your current draft?" Without application, the Olympics become entertainment disconnected from composition. Students can place an event medal or symbol beside the exact location in a real draft where the skill was used.

Try It With Students — Before & After Training

Before Training	After Training
<i>Teams read an underdeveloped paragraph and simply tell each other to "add more."</i>	Each teammate calls one specific revision play — add a detail, delete a repetition, combine two sentences, rearrange for order — and marks it in the paragraph.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach Name the exact writing muscle and the quality criterion before the event begins.	Cheerleader Compete with courage and celebrate improvement, not only first place.
Referee Apply the rules consistently and protect respectful participation.	Fans We cheer for clear thinking, purposeful craft, recovery, and teamwork.

Teacher Script

SAY
"Today's event trains one muscle — the revision play. Before we start, here is exactly what a strong move looks like."

SAY
"When the round ends, your medal goes beside the exact spot in your own draft where you'll use this move."

- ▶ *Assign roles — planner, drafter, Fans representative, Referee — and rotate them across rounds so one student does not dominate.*
- ▶ *Recognize strongest recovery, clearest explanation, most purposeful revision, and greatest growth — not only first place.*
- ▶ *End every event with transfer: "Where will you use this move in your current draft?"*

" " = say word-for-word · ▶ = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Transfer to the WCR: WCR Olympic events can isolate prompt analysis, thesis, evidence matching, explanation, inference, and editing — use them as practice before an independent response, not as a substitute for sustained writing.

Training Routine

1

Select one skill and define what successful performance looks like.

2

Choose an individual, partner, or team event that produces several meaningful reps.

3

Recognize process, growth, and collaboration alongside quality.

4

Require transfer of the practiced skill into an authentic draft.

Locker Room Reflection

- ➡ Will this event strengthen a real writing behavior or only create excitement?
- ➡ How will quality be protected when time is included?
- ➡ What recognition categories honor growth and teamwork?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Tip. Never post public rankings of overall writing ability. Keep events short, skill-specific, and varied so every student can experience a legitimate strength and a next training target.

FINISH STRONG

The Writing Olympics celebrate the many forms of writing strength. Designed carefully, they turn practice into shared energy and send every athlete back to the real draft with a stronger move.

Hall of Fame Writers

Learning resilience, revision, and purpose from real writing lives.

BIG IDEA

Writers become Hall of Fame models not because every sentence came easily, but because they observed, practiced, revised, persisted, and kept sharing ideas.

© TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

Supports writing identity, endurance, craft, and publication across **3.11** and **3.12**; provides mentor-author context for genre and process instruction.

GRADE 4

Supports **4.11** / **4.12** — building writing identity through mentor authors.

GRADE 5

Supports **5.11** / **5.12** — studying process and purpose in real writing lives.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — connecting reading of authors' lives to one's own writing process.

Students often see only the published book, polished speech, or famous poem. The rejected drafts, notebooks, revisions, research, uncertainty, and years of practice stay hidden. Hall of Fame Writers makes that process **visible** through age-appropriate author stories and local examples. The purpose is not a list of perfect geniuses — it is to show many pathways into writing: storytellers who preserved family history, journalists who investigated questions, poets who observed language closely, scientists who explained discoveries, and children who wrote because something needed to change.

Study the Training Behind the Text

Choose writers whose lives reveal a useful **training habit** — revision, research, persistence, observation. When reading about an author, ask what the writer practiced, what obstacle appeared, how they revised, who their Fans were, and why the message mattered. Whenever possible, compare drafts, notebooks, or revision stories from reliable sources: published work has a history.

Build a Classroom Hall of Fame

Create displays or portfolios that honor specific achievements — strongest revision, clearest explanation, most thoughtful audience decision, courageous restart, or effective use of evidence.

Rotate students so the Hall of Fame represents *growth* rather than permanent status, and have each writer add a brief plaque explaining the strategy behind the selected work.

Become the Mentor

Students deepen their identity when they teach a strategy to someone else — modeling a planning map for a younger class, explaining a punctuation rule, or sharing a revised paragraph and the thinking behind it. The move from learner to mentor shows that writing strength includes reflection and contribution.

Try It With Students — Before & After Training

Before Training	After Training
Award: "Best Writer."	Recovery Writer — Jordan: Jordan noticed the first evidence did not support the thesis, returned to the text, selected a stronger detail, and rewrote the explanation so the Fans could follow the reasoning.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach Study the writer's process. What habit or strategy can we practice?	Cheerleader Published writers struggle, revise, and keep going — your drafts are part of that same work.
Referee Verify the facts of a writer's life before honoring them — celebrate the documented process, not a myth.	Fans Show us the habit behind the finished work, and where we can use it.

Teacher Script

SAY

"This award isn't 'best writer' — it's for a specific move. Jordan's is the Recovery award: they noticed weak evidence and rebuilt the explanation."

SAY

"Where could you use that same recovery move in your own draft this week?"

- ▶ Name the specific writing behavior being honored, not a general "best."
 - ▶ Show a before-and-after example when the student agrees, and ask the writer to explain the strategy in one or two sentences.
 - ▶ Verify biographical claims before sharing — the most trustworthy profile is specific about the documented process, not an inspirational myth.
- " " = say word-for-word • ▶ = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Transfer to the WCR: Hall of Fame WCR examples should be annotated for process, not presented as perfect models — label the thesis, evidence, explanation, inference, revision, and Referee corrections so students see how the response was built.

Training Routine

1

Select a real writer or student example with a visible training habit.

2

Identify the obstacle, strategy, revision, audience, and impact.

3

Connect the habit to a current classroom writing target.

4

Have students practice and reflect on the same habit in their own work.

Locker Room Reflection

- ➡ Which writers and community communicators represent diverse purposes and genres?
- ➡ Does my Hall of Fame celebrate process or fixed talent?
- ➡ How can students become mentors for one another?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Tip. Verify biographical claims before sharing them, and avoid inspirational myths that simplify a writer's life. The most trustworthy profile is specific about the documented process and the real obstacles the writer faced.

FINISH STRONG

The Hall of Fame reminds students that writing strength has a history. Every polished text stands on observation, practice, courage, feedback, revision, and the decision to keep communicating.

Publish for the Fans

Preparing legible, appropriate written work for real audiences.

BIG IDEA

Publication is the moment the writer accepts responsibility for how the work will reach and affect the intended audience.

◎ TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

3.11(E)(i) publish written work for appropriate audiences; supports the 3.11 stem expectation that compositions are legible and use appropriate conventions.

GRADE 4

4.11(E) — publish for audiences with appropriate form and conventions.

GRADE 5

5.11(E) — publish a complete composition matched to audience and purpose.

ELPS: c.5(B) & c.5(G) — producing legible, purposeful writing appropriate for a specific audience.

Game day is not practice copied neatly — it is the application of training in front of an audience. Publication is similar: the writer prepares a selected piece so the Fans can access it in an appropriate, legible, and purposeful form. Publication does not mean every draft becomes a decorated final copy. Writers select pieces worth sharing and match the form to the audience — a handwritten letter, typed article, class book, poster, poem performance, presentation, or protected digital publication.

Select and Prepare

Not every practice rep becomes a public performance. Students choose a piece based on purpose, growth, quality, or audience need, then complete final revision and editing — without erasing the evidence of the drafting journey that produced it.

Final Referee and Fans Passes

The Referee checks the targeted conventions, names, titles, spelling, punctuation, and sentence boundaries. The Fans check whether the publication has enough context, a suitable tone, and a clear purpose. Teach students to read the final version aloud — or have a partner read it exactly as written — because any stumble becomes useful final feedback.

Reflection After Publication

Athletes study performance after game day, and writers should too: What worked for the Fans? Which strategy produced the greatest improvement? What will the writer train next? Save selected drafts and published pieces so students can see long-term growth in endurance and craft.

Try It With Students — Before & After Training

Before Training	After Training
<i>All students copy the same paragraph onto decorative paper, regardless of who will read it.</i>	The class chooses a form for each audience — a labeled poster for the hallway, a short letter to the water district, a page for the class conservation book — and prepares each for that specific reader.

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach Choose the best format and complete the final revision needed for this audience and purpose.	Cheerleader Your work has grown through many drafts. Prepare it with pride and courage.
Referee Complete a focused final check for conventions, names, spelling, legibility, and format.	Fans We are ready to receive the message — make it accessible, appropriate, and complete.

Teacher Script

SAY

"This piece is going to a real reader. Read it aloud exactly as written — every stumble is a note for your final fix."

SAY

"Now choose the form that fits your Fans: who reads it, and what shape helps them receive it?"

► Have students select a piece worth sharing based on purpose, growth, quality, or audience need — not every rep becomes a public performance.

► Read the final version aloud, or have a partner read it exactly as written, and treat any stumble as final feedback.

► Set a publication time budget that protects content, conventions, and audience before visual finishing.

" " = say word-for-word · ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Transfer to the WCR: a state-assessment WCR is a limited form of publication for an evaluator — produce a legible, complete response and reserve time for a final check. But classroom publishing should also include richer authentic audiences so writing identity does not become test-only.

Training Routine

1

Select a piece and name the appropriate audience and publication form.

2

Complete final revision for purpose, clarity, and impact.

3

Edit targeted conventions and verify legibility.

4

Share, gather audience response, and reflect on growth.

Locker Room Reflection

- ➡ Which authentic audiences can receive student writing this semester?
- ➡ How will students distinguish publication from decoration?
- ➡ What reflection will follow the audience experience?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Tip. Avoid making decoration consume more time than revision — a beautiful border cannot compensate for unclear writing. Establish a publication time budget that protects content, conventions, and audience before visual finishing.

FINISH STRONG

Publishing completes the communication cycle. The Athletic Writer prepares the message carefully, sends it to the right Fans, studies the response, and carries the learning into the next event.

The Championship Writer

Thinking, persisting, adapting, and continuing to grow throughout life.

BIG IDEA

Championship writing is not a single perfect product. It is a durable way of thinking, communicating, recovering, and growing.

© TRAINING TARGET — STANDARDS CONNECTION

GRADE 3

Synthesizes all Grade 3 composition expectations in **3.11** and **3.12**; emphasizes transfer from supported classroom practice to independent, lifelong writing.

GRADE 4

Synthesizes **4.11** / **4.12** toward self-directed composition.

GRADE 5

Synthesizes **5.11** / **5.12** toward independent, lifelong writing across purposes.

ELPS: c.5(B), c.5(E) & c.5(G) — writing independently across genres, audiences, and purposes with growing control.

Championship athletes are not defined by one flawless game — they are defined by the habits that let them prepare, perform, respond to feedback, recover from setbacks, and keep developing.

Championship Writers carry the same habits into every new genre, audience, and purpose. By the end of this book, the student has learned far more than a sequence of steps: to identify an event, prepare a plan, build focused and coherent ideas, select craft, revise strategically, edit conventions, publish for an audience, and recover when the process becomes difficult — and, most importantly, to internalize the four voices that make independence possible.

Championship Writers Think and Adapt

They plan on purpose, and their persistence is always connected to the Coach: "Keep going" becomes "Try a new map," "select different evidence," or "write the explanation orally first." They change genre decisions for different Fans, revise structure when a draft reveals a better order, and use feedback without surrendering ownership. Independence is not refusing support — it is choosing support strategically.

Championship Writers Continue Growing

Grade-level standards are an important training season, not the end of the writing career. The habits transfer into science explanations, social studies arguments, mathematical reasoning, technical directions, applications, emails, stories, reports, speeches, and civic communication. A lifelong Athletic Writer keeps reading, noticing craft, seeking feedback, revising, and writing for real purposes — and the four voices mature but remain part of the internal team.

The Teacher's Final Role

The teacher begins as the external Coach, Cheerleader, Referee, and representative of the Fans — and gradually hands each voice to the student. The goal of every chapter in this book has been this transfer: a writer who can run the whole process alone, and who chooses to keep writing.

Try It With Students — Before & After Training

Before Training	After Training
Teacher: "Add more details, fix the spelling, and rewrite the ending."	Teacher: "What event are you writing? Which part is strongest? Where do your Fans need more? Which revision play will you call — and what should the Referee check after that?" Student: "I need to add an explanation after my second evidence, then check verb tense."

The Four Voices in This Training

Coach	Cheerleader
Ask the questions that transfer — event, strengths, needs, next move — instead of giving the answers.	You have grown into a writer who can lead your own conference. Trust the team inside you.
Referee	Fans
You know which checks matter for this piece — run them yourself, in order.	Speak to us on purpose, in any genre, for the rest of your life.

Teacher Script

SAY "Instead of me telling you what to change — what event are you writing, which part is strongest, and where do your Fans need more?"
SAY "Which revision play will you call, and what should the Referee check after that?"

- ▶ Ask the student to name the purpose, Fans, and current stage of the process.
- ▶ Require the student to diagnose one strength and one need, then select the voice and strategy for the next move.
- ▶ End with a transferable goal the student can carry into the next writing event.

" " = say word-for-word · ▶ = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Transfer to the WCR: the independent WCR becomes a championship application when students can analyze the prompt, run TREES, develop evidence and explanation, recover from fatigue, revise for clarity, and complete a focused Referee pass — without constant adult prompting.

Training Routine

1

Prepare by identifying event, purpose, Fans, and plan.

2

Compose with focused ideas, relevant development, and genre-appropriate craft.

3

Revise and edit strategically, recovering when the process breaks down.

4

Publish, reflect, and carry the habit into the next writing event.

Locker Room Reflection

- ➡ Which of the four voices do my students still rely on me to supply?
- ➡ Where have I seen a student lead their own writing conference?
- ➡ How will these habits transfer beyond this grade and this year?

For the Coach — Teacher Tip

Tip. The teacher begins as the external Coach, Cheerleader, Referee, and Fans — and slowly hands each voice to the student. Success is measured less by a perfect paper than by a writer who can run the whole process alone and chooses to keep writing.

FINISH STRONG

The Championship Writer is not the one who never struggles — it is the one who prepares, persists, adapts, recovers, and keeps writing for real purposes. The four voices, once the teacher's, now belong to the writer for life.

Appendix A • Grades 3-5 TEKS Crosswalk

One crosswalk for all three grades. Each Athletic Writer skill maps to its home chapter and to the parallel Texas standard at Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 — so a single table verifies coverage across the grade band. Because the writing process is recursive, many expectations reappear across chapters.

Athletic Writer Skill	Chapter	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Plan a first draft — genre, topic, purpose, audience	7-9	3.11(A)(i)	4.11(A)	5.11(A)
Draft with a purposeful introduction	10, 14	3.11(B)(i)	4.11(B)	5.11(B)
Draft with a purposeful conclusion	13, 14	3.11(B)(ii)	4.11(B)	5.11(B)
Develop an engaging idea with relevant details	11-12	3.11(B)(iii)	4.11(B)	5.11(B)
Revise to improve sentence structure	15-16	3.11(C)(i)	4.11(C)	5.11(C)
Revise to improve word choice	17	3.11(C)(ii)	4.11(C)	5.11(C)
Revise — add, delete, combine, rearrange for coherence & clarity	18-20	3.11(C)(iii-x)	4.11(C)	5.11(C)
Edit — complete simple & compound sentences, subject-verb agreement	21	3.11(D)(i-ii)	4.11(D)	5.11(D)
Edit — past, present, and future verb tense	22	3.11(D)(iii-v)	4.11(D)	5.11(D)
Edit — singular, plural, common, and proper nouns	23	3.11(D)(vi-ix)	4.11(D)	5.11(D)
Edit — comparative/superlative adjectives & adverbs	24	3.11(D)(x-xiii)	4.11(D)	5.11(D)
Edit — prepositions & prepositional phrases	25	3.11(D)(xiv-xv)	4.11(D)	5.11(D)
Edit — subjective, objective, possessive pronouns	26	3.11(D)(xvi-xviii)	4.11(D)	5.11(D)
Edit — coordinating conjunctions (compound subjects/predicates/sentences)	27	3.11(D)(xix-xxi)	4.11(D)	5.11(D)
Edit — capitalization (titles, holidays, geographic names/places)	28	3.11(D)(xxii-xxv)	4.11(D)	5.11(D)
Edit — apostrophes & commas	29	3.11(D)(xxvi-xxix)	4.11(D)	5.11(D)
Edit — spelling (patterns, rules, high-frequency words)	30	3.11(D)(xxx-xxxii)	4.11(D)	5.11(D)
Publish written work for appropriate audiences	9, 41	3.11(E)(i)	4.11(E)	5.11(E)
Compose personal narratives — genre characteristics & craft	31	3.12(A)(i-ii)	4.12(A)	5.12(A)
Compose poetry — genre characteristics & craft	32	3.12(A)(iii-iv)	4.12(A)	5.12(A)

Athletic Writer Skill	Chapter	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Compose informational texts — clear central idea, genre & craft	33	3.12(B)(i-iii)	4.12(B)	5.12(B)
Compose opinion / argument — genre characteristics & craft	34	3.12(C)(i-ii)	4.12(C)	5.12(C)
Compose correspondence — thank-you notes & letters	35	3.12(D)(i)	4.12(D)	5.12(D)

Grade 3 codes include the specific supplied breakouts. Grades 4 and 5 use the same writing-process (X.11) and composition (X.12) strands; each skill has a direct grade-level equivalent, with breakout numbering that varies by grade.

Appendix B • Four Voices Prompt Cards

Post these prompts where students can see them. They give each internal voice a small set of questions to ask while planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

Coach

- What is my purpose and who are my Fans?
- What is the next best writing move?
- What evidence, detail, or DEEP FACT will strengthen this idea?
- Should I add, delete, combine, or rearrange?
- What genre characteristic or craft move belongs here?

Cheerleader

- A rough draft is allowed to be rough.
- Write one useful sentence, then the next.
- Confusion means I need a strategy, not surrender.
- My ideas matter, and I can revise them.
- I can finish strong even when my writing brain is tired.

Referee

- Is this a complete sentence?
- Do the subject and verb agree?
- Is the verb tense consistent?
- Did I check capitalization, punctuation, and spelling?
- Can a reader understand exactly what I mean?

Fans

- What does my audience need to know?
- Where might my reader become confused?
- Which part will interest or move my reader?
- Does the ending leave the reader with something important?
- Is this ready to share with pride?

Appendix C • Complete Written Constructed Response

This appendix demonstrates the full WCR process with two short original texts, a prompt, TREES planning, the four voices during drafting, and a published model response. The response length can be adjusted for local expectations.

Text 1 – The Garden Team

Ava wanted the empty courtyard beside her school to become a garden. Before anyone planted a seed, she drew a map of the space and asked classmates to choose jobs. One group loosened the soil, another labeled the rows, and a third group carried water.

During the first week, several plants wilted in the afternoon heat. Some students wanted to start over, but Ava studied the problem. The team changed its watering schedule and built small shades from recycled cardboard. Two weeks later, new leaves appeared. The garden did not grow because the work was easy. It grew because the students planned, adjusted, and kept working together.

Text 2 – What Makes a Community Garden Work?

Community gardens succeed when people share responsibility. A plan helps gardeners decide where crops will grow, who will complete each task, and how water and tools will be used. Regular care is also important because plants need attention after the first day of planting.

Problems such as insects, heat, or missed watering days are common. Successful gardening groups observe what is happening and change their methods when needed. Planning starts the project, but persistence keeps it alive.

PROMPT

Explain how planning and persistence help a community project succeed. Use evidence from both texts to support your response.

TREES Planning

T	Thesis Planning gives people direction, and persistence helps them solve problems until the project succeeds.
R	Reasons or Ways A plan organizes jobs and resources. Persistence helps the team adjust when difficulties appear.
E	Evidence Ava maps the garden and assigns jobs. The team changes the watering schedule and makes shade. Text 2 explains that successful groups share responsibility and change methods when needed.
	Explanation

E	These details show that success requires both a strong beginning and continued effort.
S	Significant Inferencing A project can have an excellent plan and still fail if people stop when the first problem appears.

The Four Voices During Drafting

Coach	State the thesis first so your Fans know the point.	Cheerleader	Do not wait for a perfect sentence. Write the clear sentence you can improve.
Coach	Use one piece of evidence from each text.	Fans	Explain the evidence. Do not make us guess why it matters.
Referee	Check that the subjects and verbs agree and that the verb tense stays consistent.	Coach	Add the significant inference: planning begins the work, but persistence carries it through trouble.
Cheerleader	You are in the fourth quarter. Finish the conclusion.	Fans	This response is clear, supported, and ready to share.

PUBLISHED MODEL RESPONSE

Planning and persistence help a community project succeed because people need both direction and the determination to solve problems. In "The Garden Team," Ava makes a map and asks students to choose jobs before they plant. This plan helps everyone understand what to do. When several plants wilt, the team changes the watering schedule and builds small shades instead of quitting. The second text also explains that community gardens succeed when people share responsibility and change their methods when problems appear. These details show that a plan can start a project, but persistence is what helps the team protect the plan and reach its goal.

Appendix D • Teacher Planning Template

Use this template to plan a single Athletic Writer training session — one writing muscle, one leading voice, and a clear path from think-aloud to independent practice.

TEKS training target	
Writing muscle	
Primary voice	
Student-friendly goal	
Teacher think-aloud	
Mentor sentence or model	
Guided practice	
Independent practice	
Evidence of learning	
Recovery support	
Teacher Tip for next time	

Appendix E • Student Checklists and Feedback Rubric

Athletic Writer Self-Check

- ☐ I chose a genre that matches my topic, purpose, and audience.
- ☐ My introduction gives my Fans a clear place to begin.
- ☐ My ideas are focused and organized in a purposeful order.
- ☐ I used relevant details, evidence, and explanation.
- ☐ I revised by adding, deleting, combining, or rearranging.
- ☐ I checked sentence structure and word choice.
- ☐ I invited the Referee to check conventions after the draft was developed.
- ☐ My conclusion finishes the thinking instead of merely stopping.
- ☐ I reread from the point of view of my Fans.
- ☐ I can name one place where my writing became stronger.

Feedback Rubric

Area	Beginning	Developing	Athletic
Planning and Purpose	Genre, purpose, audience, and plan are unclear.	Some planning is visible, but the direction changes.	Genre, purpose, audience, and plan are clear and useful.
Development	Ideas are brief or unsupported.	Ideas include some relevant details or evidence.	Ideas are engaging, relevant, and thoroughly explained.
Organization	The reader has difficulty following the order.	The order is mostly understandable.	The introduction, body, transitions, and conclusion work together.
Revision	Few meaningful changes are made.	At least one revision improves the draft.	The writer adds, deletes, combines, and/or rearranges strategically.
Conventions	Errors frequently interrupt meaning.	Some errors remain, but meaning is understandable.	Standard English conventions support clear reading.
Endurance and Independence	The writer stops quickly or depends on constant prompting.	The writer continues with some support.	The writer self-coaches, recovers, and completes the process independently.

Appendix F • Five-Day Athletic Writer Microcycle

A repeatable weekly rhythm that moves a piece from plan to publication while training endurance across the whole process.

Monday • Pregame

Analyze the prompt, choose genre / purpose / audience, and plan with a map or freewrite.

Tuesday • Opening and Development

Draft the introduction, thesis or central idea, and the first developed section.

Wednesday • Evidence and Elaboration

Add relevant details, text evidence, TREES elements, and DEEP FACTS.

Thursday • Film Room

Revise with ADD, DELETE, COMBINE, and REARRANGE; strengthen clarity and coherence.

Friday • Referee and Fans

Edit conventions, publish for an audience, celebrate growth, and set the next goal.

Appendix G • Glossary of Athletic Writer Terms

Athletic Writer

A writer who plans, composes, revises, edits, recovers, and persists with increasing independence.

Coach

The internal strategy voice that teaches the next writing move.

Cheerleader

The internal endurance voice that protects confidence and persistence.

Referee

The internal monitoring voice that checks rules, clarity, and correctness.

Fans

The internal audience voice that asks whether the writing serves its reader.

Writing endurance

The capacity to continue generating, organizing, revising, and editing despite cognitive fatigue.

Recursive process

A process in which writers move back and forth among planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

Coherence

The way ideas fit and flow together logically.

Clarity

The ease with which a reader can understand the writer's intended meaning.

TREES

Thesis, Reasons or Ways, Evidence, Explanation, and Significant Inferencing.

DEEP FACTS

The nine explanation moves: Definition, Example & Illustration, Expert Testimony, Process (step-by-step), Facts & Statistics, Analogy, Compare & Contrast, Tipping Point (cause & effect), and Story / Anecdote.

TRAILS

The narrative planning framework: Topic, Relationships, Actions (thoughts and dialogue), Important Moment, Lesson or Lasting Effect, and Setting.

CREATURES

The argument framework: Claim, Reasons, Evidence, Argument, Thinking, Understanding Others (counterargument), Rebuttal, Ending, and Significance.

CSI

What makes evidence relevant: it Connects to the prompt, Supports the thesis statement, and lets the reader Infer more ideas.

Fourth Quarter Writer

A writer who maintains strategic thinking and effort near the end of a demanding task.

Writing recovery

The use of strategies to restart thinking after confusion, distraction, fatigue, or writer's block.