

# The Common Core State Standards

*Writing*

The grades 6–12 standards on the following pages define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade. They correspond to the CCR anchor standards by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

### Text Types and Purposes\*

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the elective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using elective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

### Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended times (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter times (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### Note on Range and Content of Student Writing

For students, writing is a key means of asserting and defending claims, showing what they know about a subject, and conveying what they have experienced, imagined, thought, and felt. To be CCR writers, students must take task, purpose, and audience into careful consideration, choosing words, information, structures, and formats deliberately. They need to know how to combine elements of different kinds of writing—for example, to use narrative strategies within argument and explanation within narrative—to produce complex and nuanced writing. They need to be able to use technology strategically when creating, refining, and collaborating on writing. They have to become adept at gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately and reporting findings from their research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner. They must have the flexibility, concentration, and fluency to produce high-quality, first-draft text under a tight deadline as well as the capacity to revisit and make improvements to a piece of writing over multiple drafts when circumstances encourage or require it.

\* These broad types of writing include many subgenres. See Appendix A for definitions of key writing types.

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# College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for *Writing*

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The College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards are the same for all middle and high school students, regardless of subject area or grade level. What varies is the sophistication of the writing of the three types—argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative—stressed at each subsequent grade level in each disciplinary domain. The core writing skills should not change as students advance; rather, the level at which they learn and can perform those skills should increase in complexity as students move from one grade to the next.

## Text Types and Purposes\*

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Argument appears first as it is essential to success in college and develops the critical faculties needed in the adult world. Crafting arguments requires students to analyze texts or topics and determine which evidence best supports their arguments. Informational/explanatory writing conveys ideas, events, and findings by choosing and explaining the behavior, meaning, or importance of key details.

Students draw from a range of sources, including primary and secondary sources. Narrative writing includes not just stories but accounts of historical events and lab procedures. Students write to change minds, hearts, and actions (argument); to extend readers' knowledge or acceptance of ideas and procedures (informational/explanatory); and to inform, inspire, persuade, or entertain (narrative).

## Production and Distribution of Writing

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This set of anchor standards involves the stages of the writing process. These standards also highlight the importance of knowing who the audience is and the style and format the writer should use to achieve a purpose. Students also learn the skills needed throughout the writing process:

generating ideas and trying other styles, structures, perspectives, or processes as they bring their ideas into focus and some final form. Finally, these standards call for writers to use technology not only to publish but to collaborate throughout the writing process with others.

## Research to Build and Present Knowledge

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These standards focus on inquiry processes of varying lengths, all of which should develop students' knowledge of the subject they are investigating and the skills needed to conduct that investigation. Students acquire and refine the ability to find, evaluate, and use a range of sources

during these research projects, which can take as long as a period to as much as a month. Such inquiries demand students correctly cite the source of all information to ensure they learn what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

## Range of Writing

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This standard emphasizes not only what students write but how often and for what purposes they write over the course of the school year. Writing, as this standard makes clear, is something students should be doing constantly and for

substantial lengths of time. Also, they should write for an array of reasons and audiences and in response to a mix of topics and tasks.

\* These broad types of writing include many subgenres. See Appendix A for definitions of key writing types.

**Writing 1:** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

### English Language Arts

- 6** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.
  - Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
  - Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.
  - Establish and maintain a formal style.
  - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.

- 7** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- Introduce claim(s), **acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and** organize the reasons and evidence **logically**.
  - Support claim(s) with **logical reasoning** and relevant evidence, using **accurate**, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
  - Use words, phrases, and clauses to **create cohesion** and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, **and evidence**.
  - Establish and maintain a formal style.
  - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from **and supports** the argument presented.

### History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Studies

- 6** Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
- Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
  - Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.
  - Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
  - Establish and maintain a formal style.
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  - Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
  - Establish and maintain a formal style.
  - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

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## Common Core Writing Standard 1

### What the **Student** Does

#### English Language Arts

**6 Gist:** Construct arguments to defend claims which, when introduced, say *what* you claim and *why*, providing strong reasons and evidence from credible sources that show students understand the text or topic. Students clarify these different relationships among claim(s) and reasons by choosing language (words, phrases, clauses) and adopting a formal style that suits and maintain their argument until the conclusion, where they connect all ideas, claims, and reasons in a logical way that proceeds from and supports their argument.

- What do you claim—and *why*?
- What evidence, from *reliable* sources, do you offer to support your claim(s)?
- How does your conclusion follow from all that precedes it?

**7 Gist:** Construct arguments to defend claims which, when introduced, say *what* you claim and *why*, providing logical reasons and evidence from responsible and reliable sources that show students understand the text or topic. Here, students also identify and make concessions to conflicting or differing claims, which are arranged logically. Students clarify these different relationships among claim(s) and reasons by choosing language (words, phrases, clauses) and adopting a formal style that adds cohesion and clarity up through the conclusion, where they connect all ideas, claims, and reasons in a logical way that proceeds from and supports their argument.

- What do you claim—and *why*?
- What are the other perspectives—alternative, conflicting—you should be considering?
- How does your conclusion follow from all that precedes it?

#### History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Studies

**6 Gist:** Construct arguments about disciplinary ideas or content, introducing *what* you claim and *why*, providing logical reasons, evidence, and data from responsible and reliable sources that show students understand the text or topic, even as you concede that there are other perspectives and counterclaims. Here, students also identify and explain how their claims are different from the conflicting or differing claims. Students clarify these different relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence by choosing language (words, phrases, clauses) and adopting a formal style that adds cohesion and clarity up through the conclusion, where they connect all the ideas, claims, and reasons in a logical way that proceeds from and supports their argument.

- What do you claim, why, and how is your claim distinct from all others about this subject?
- What other perspectives—alternative, conflicting—should you be considering?
- How does your conclusion follow from all that precedes it?

**7 Gist:** Construct arguments about disciplinary ideas or content, introducing *what* you claim and *why*, providing logical reasons, evidence, and data from responsible and reliable sources that show students understand the text or topic, even as you concede that there are other perspectives and counterclaims. Here, students also identify and explain how their claims are different from the conflicting or differing claims. Students clarify these different relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence by choosing language (words, phrases, clauses) and adopting a formal style that adds cohesion and clarity up through the conclusion, where they connect all the ideas, claims, and reasons in a logical way that proceeds from and supports their argument.

- What do you claim, why, and how is your claim distinct from all others about this subject?
- What other perspectives—alternative, conflicting—should you be considering?
- How does your conclusion follow from all that precedes it?

**Writing 1:** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

### English Language Arts

- 8** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and **distinguish the claim(s)** from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
  - Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
  - Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), **counterclaims**, reasons, and evidence.
  - Establish and maintain a formal style.
  - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

### History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Studies

- 8** Write arguments focused on discipline specific content.
- Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
  - Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.
  - Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
  - Establish and maintain a formal style.
  - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

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## Common Core Writing Standard 1

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### What the **Student** Does

#### English Language Arts

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**8** **Gist:** Construct arguments to defend claims which, when introduced, say *what* you claim and *why*, providing logical reasons and evidence from responsible and reliable sources that show students understand the text or topic. Here, students also identify and explain how their claims are different from the conflicting or differing claims. Students clarify these different relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence by choosing language (words, phrases, clauses) and adopting a formal style that adds cohesion and clarity up through the conclusion, where they connect all the ideas, claims, and reasons in a logical way that proceeds from and supports their argument.

- What do you claim, why, and how is your claim distinct from all others about this subject?
- What other perspectives—alternative, conflicting—should you be considering?
- How does your conclusion follow from all that precedes it?

#### History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Studies

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- What do you claim, why, and how is your claim distinct from all others about this subject?
- What other perspectives—alternative, conflicting—should you be considering?
- How does your conclusion follow from all that precedes it?

## Common Core Writing Standard 1

### What the **Teacher** Does

#### To help students understand and learn to write arguments, do the following:

- Provide students with a range of sample arguments so they learn to distinguish between effective and ineffective arguments.
- Have students read whole papers to see how writers use claims and evidence over the course of the whole text.
- Keep and use both professional and student models for subsequent study of what to do—and what *not* to do.
- Require students to label the elements of their argument (e.g., claim, evidence, reason), and evaluate the quality of each in light of whatever criteria are most appropriate on that occasion.
- Help students establish and apply criteria for determining the quality of topics and texts, claims and counterclaims, evidence and reasons.
- Use structured note-taking formats (e.g., columns with headers such as claim, reason, evidence) in the early stages to help students understand the elements and see how they work together to support the argument.

#### To evaluate others' and make their own claims, do the following:

- Give students sets of claims with varying degrees of specificity and insight; ask them to evaluate each by some criteria or arrange them all on a continuum of quality.
- Ask students to provide a list of possible counterclaims, alternative positions, values, or biases to consider when writing their claims or evaluating/responding to those of others.
- Generate questions to help students analyze texts and topics, evidence and reasoning, and claims and counterclaims when developing or supporting their claims.

#### To use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships, do the following:

- Distribute highlighters or crayons, and then ask students to indicate those words that create cohesion by linking or serving as transitions between claims and reasons, reasons and evidence, and claims and counterclaims.
- Together, examine sentences for a variety of style and syntax, especially as these help clarify and emphasize

the relationships and general cohesion between the different elements.

- Generate words that are appropriate to the tone, topic, and type of argument, as well as the audience, occasion, and purpose; this can be done as a class, in groups, or independently.
- Invite students to use such techniques as backward outlining to assess the logic of their arguments within a paragraph or the whole text.

#### To teach students how to generate, evaluate, and use evidence, do the following:

- Have students investigate how they might use data—statistics, surveys, or other quantitative information—to support their claims; include in this discussion why they should or should not do so.
- Show students how to gather and evaluate evidence when preparing to write (e.g., during the research/prewriting phase).

#### To introduce or extend knowledge of other aspects of argument, do the following:

- Discuss with students the formats and styles used by different disciplines or on special occasions.
- Develop a guide or scoring rubric based on the Common Core writing standard description for argument.
- Think aloud about an effective and ineffective model, or some portion (e.g., introducing the claims) of the paper; you might display it on a big screen as you walk through it and point out what is and is not effective and why that is.
- Bring in other forms of argument—visual, infographic, multimedia—to deepen their understanding of argument.
- Avoid separating writing arguments from the equally important study of argument in reading and speaking.

#### To help your English Language Learners, try this:

- Discuss the *idea* of argument, as it may be a foreign and even troubling concept for many students, given their culture's emphasis on respect for authorities and elders.





## Common Core Writing Standard 1

### Academic Vocabulary: Key Words and Phrases

**Analysis:** This refers to dividing ideas, content, or processes into separate elements to examine what it is, how it works, and what it is made from.

**Argument:** Arguments have three objectives: to explain, to persuade, and to mediate conflicts between positions, readers, or ideas. Writers make logical claims—supported with reasons, evidence, and different appeals—to advance their argument(s).

**Claim:** This is a word with many apparent, sometimes confusing iterations: *proposition*, *assertion*, *thesis*; it is sometimes mistaken for *argument*. Not the same as the subject or topic: A claim must be able to be argued and must require defense through evidence. Alternate or opposing claims suggest other, sometimes contradictory claims one should consider. Effective claims are precise, clear, properly qualified, and affirmative. A thesis statement is the writer's main claim.

**Clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons:** Writers should have a reason for the claim(s) they make. They think X (*the claim*) is true because of Y (*a reason*). This relationship between claims and reasons should be based on evidence, not opinions or preferences.

**Cohesion:** One idea or sentence connects to another to create a sense of flow; reasons, claims, evidence, and ideas all work together.

**Concluding statement or section:** Writers provide some statement or section that connects all the

claims and evidence, and then show how they support the argument presented in the paper or speech.

**Distinguish:** This means to perceive something as, to explain how something is, or to argue that it is different or distinct from others that seem, on the surface, similar.

**Establish the significance of the claim:** *Significance* is also sometimes replaced with *substantive*; however, both mean the claim should be important, based on real and thorough knowledge about the subject.

**Evidence:** Each discipline has its own standards for evidence, but most lists would include quotations, observations, interviews, examples, facts, data, results from surveys and experiments, and, when appropriate, personal experience.

**Formal style:** The writer uses words and tone appropriate for occasion and audience; This includes a more objective tone to suggest some critical distance from the subject or claim.

**Reasons/reasoning:** Writers must base their claims and ideas on more than personal preferences or opinions when constructing arguments; reasons demand evidence, information, and logic.

**Substantive topics or texts:** Writers are expected to be writing about compelling, important ideas or texts that examine big questions meant to challenge the reader.

*Notes*

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**Writing 2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

### English Language Arts

**6** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- a. Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
- c. Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- e. Establish and maintain a formal style.
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.

### History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Studies

**6** Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

- a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories as appropriate to achieving purpose; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- b. Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
- c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone.
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

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## Common Core Writing Standard 2

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### What the **Student** Does

#### English Language Arts

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**6 Gist:** Explain or provide information about a subject or idea(s), choosing only the details and information related to the topic, which are then introduced, organized (e.g., by classification, cause and effect, definition) and elaborated upon through the use of graphics (e.g., tables and charts) and document design (e.g., subheaders). Students further build on these ideas by including facts, examples, concrete details, and evidence, usually in the form of quotations. Students help all these details flow and reveal the links between these ideas by making careful use of transitions which, along with precise vocabulary, aid the writer trying to explain the topic. Finally, after establishing and maintaining a formal style appropriate to the audience and purpose, students bring their paper to an end, drawing what conclusions there are about this subject and conveying them in a way that makes for a coherent and useful ending that logically connects to all that preceded it.

- What is the topic—and your purpose?
- What information and details should you include?
- How should you organize the contents so they convey the full sense of this topic?

#### History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Studies

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**6 Gist:** Explain or provide idea(s), historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes, choosing only the details and information related to the topic, which are then introduced in a way that both is clear and allows readers to anticipate what will come after, organized into more general categories and elaborated upon through the use of graphics (e.g., tables and charts) and document design (e.g., subheaders). Students further build on these ideas by including compelling, insightful facts, examples, concrete details, and evidence, usually in the form of quotations. Students help these details flow and reveal the links between these ideas by making careful use of transitions, which improve cohesion, and precise vocabulary, which aids the writer trying to explain the topic. Finally, after establishing and maintaining a formal style appropriate to the audience and purpose, students bring their paper to an end, drawing what conclusions there are about this subject and conveying them in a way that makes for a coherent and useful ending that logically connects to all that preceded it and provides the necessary support for those ideas explained or presented.

- What is the topic—and your purpose?
- How do you use transitions to create greater cohesion and show the relationships among ideas here?
- How should you organize the contents so they convey the full sense of this topic?

**Writing 2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

### English Language Arts

**7** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- a. Introduce a topic **clearly, previewing what is to follow**; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension
- b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
- c. Use appropriate transitions to **create cohesion and** clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- e. Establish and maintain a formal style.
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from **and supports** the information or explanation presented.

### History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Studies

**7** Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

- a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories as appropriate to achieving purpose; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- b. Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
- c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone.
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

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### What the **Student** Does

#### English Language Arts

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**7 Gist:** Explain or provide information about a subject or idea(s), choosing only the details and information related to the topic, which are then introduced in a way that both is clear and allows readers to anticipate what will come after, organized (e.g., by classification, cause and effect, definition) and elaborated upon through the use of graphics (e.g., tables and charts) and document design (e.g., subheaders). Students further build on these ideas by including facts, examples, concrete details, and evidence, usually in the form of quotations. Students help these details flow and reveal the links between these ideas by making careful use of transitions, which improve cohesion, and precise vocabulary, which aids the writer trying to explain the topic. Finally, after establishing and maintaining a formal style appropriate to the audience and purpose, students bring their paper to an end, drawing what conclusions there are about this subject and conveying them in a way that makes for a coherent and useful ending that logically connects to all that preceded it and provides the necessary support for those ideas explained or presented.

- What is the topic—and your purpose?
- How do you use transitions to create greater cohesion and show the relationships among ideas here?
- How should you organize the contents so they convey the full sense of this topic?

#### History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Studies

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**7 Gist:** Explain or provide idea(s), historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes, choosing only the details and information related to the topic, which are then introduced in a way that both is clear and allows readers to anticipate what will come after, organized into more general categories and elaborated upon through the use of graphics (e.g., tables and charts) and document design (e.g., subheaders). Students further build on these ideas by including compelling, insightful facts, examples, concrete details, and evidence, usually in the form of quotations. Students help these details flow and reveal the links between these ideas by making careful use of transitions, which improve cohesion, and precise vocabulary, which aids the writer trying to explain the topic. Finally, after establishing and maintaining a formal style appropriate to the audience and purpose, students bring their paper to an end, drawing what conclusions there are about this subject and conveying them in a way that makes for a coherent and useful ending that logically connects to all that preceded it and provides the necessary support for those ideas explained or presented.

- What is the topic—and your purpose?
- How do you use transitions to create greater cohesion and show the relationships among ideas here?
- How should you organize the contents so they convey the full sense of this topic?

**Writing 2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

### English Language Arts

- 8** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information **into broader categories**; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
  - Develop the topic with relevant, **well-chosen facts**, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
  - Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
  - Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
  - Establish and maintain a formal style.
  - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

### History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Studies

- 8** Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
- Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories as appropriate to achieving purpose; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
  - Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
  - Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
  - Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
  - Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone.
  - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

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## Common Core Writing Standard 2

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### What the **Student** Does

#### English Language Arts

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**8** **Gist:** Explain or provide information about a subject or idea(s), choosing only the details and information related to the topic, which are then introduced in a way that both is clear and allows readers to anticipate what will come after, organized into more general categories and elaborated upon through the use of graphics (e.g., tables and charts) and document design (e.g., subheaders). Students further build on these ideas by including compelling, insightful facts, examples, concrete details, and evidence, usually in the form of quotations. Students help these details flow and reveal the links between these ideas by making careful use of transitions, which improve cohesion, and precise vocabulary, which aids the writer trying to explain the topic. Finally, after establishing and maintaining a formal style appropriate to the audience and purpose, students bring their paper to an end, drawing what conclusions there are about this subject and conveying them in a way that makes for a coherent and useful ending that logically connects to all that preceded it and provides the necessary support for those ideas explained or presented.

- What is the topic—and your purpose?
- How do you use transitions to create greater cohesion and show the relationships among ideas here?
- How should you organize the contents so they convey the full sense of this topic?

#### History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Studies

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**8** **Gist:** Explain or provide idea(s), historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes, choosing only the details and information related to the topic, which are then introduced in a way that both is clear and allows readers to anticipate what will come after, organized into more general categories and elaborated upon through the use of graphics (e.g., tables and charts) and document design (e.g., subheaders). Students further build on these ideas by including compelling, insightful facts, examples, concrete details, and evidence, usually in the form of quotations. Students help these details flow and reveal the links between these ideas by making careful use of transitions, which improve cohesion, and precise vocabulary, which aids the writer trying to explain the topic. Finally, after establishing and maintaining a formal style appropriate to the audience and purpose, students bring their paper to an end, drawing what conclusions there are about this subject and conveying them in a way that makes for a coherent and useful ending that logically connects to all that preceded it and provides the necessary support for those ideas explained or presented.

- What is the topic—and your purpose?
- How do you use transitions to create greater cohesion and show the relationships among ideas here?
- How should you organize the contents so they convey the full sense of this topic?

### What the **Teacher** Does

#### **To introduce students to informative/explanatory texts, do the following:**

- Show them a range of examples—from students, professional writers, or even yourself—so they see what it is that you want them to do and get a sense of what they should include.
- Discuss the contents, conventions, and other elements of the type of informational/explanatory text you want them to write.
- Give students a copy of a sample text and, if possible, display it on a screen so you can annotate portions of it while discussing the writer's decisions and the text's relevant features.

#### **To format and integrate graphics and multimedia into the text, have students do the following:**

- Offer direct instruction to the whole class or a smaller group of students who need to learn how to use those features of the word processor or other software applications.
- Give students step-by-step directions or create a link to a web tutorial they can watch if they do not know how.
- Give them samples that show them different types of graphs, tables, and other options they might consider when incorporating information or data into their papers.

#### **To develop their topic with details, examples, and information, have students do the following:**

- Work directly with them to generate ideas and gather evidence, data, examples, or other content; then develop with them criteria for how to evaluate and choose the best of the bunch to work into their writing.
- Use sentence stems or templates from a book like *They Say/I Say* (by Graff and Birkenstein) to teach students how to introduce or frame the quotation and then comment on the meaning or importance of that quotation.

#### **To have students use varied transitions to link ideas and create cohesion, do the following:**

- Generate with students or provide them a list of transition words and phrases specific to the type of writing they are doing (e.g., cause-effect, compare-contrast).

- Have students go through their papers once they have a complete draft and highlight the first six words of each sentence; then they can evaluate existing transitions and add others where they would improve clarity and cohesion.

#### **To help students use precise language and academic vocabulary, do the following:**

- Direct them to circle any words in their papers that are abstract, too general, or otherwise ineffective; then have them generate words that could replace weaker words or phrases.
- Generate with the class words they might or should use when writing about a specific subject, procedure, event, or person; this might include specific verbs, nouns, and adjectives for use when, for example, explaining a process or procedure.
- Provide examples of or demonstrate for them how to use other techniques such as metaphors, similes, and analogies.

#### **To establish and maintain the conventions for a discipline, have students do the following:**

- Establish for the class the proper tone, format, and other genre conventions for the type of discipline-specific writing assigned.
- Give students a checklist or annotated sample that illustrates all the discipline-specific conventions they must include.

#### **To prepare them to write about historical events, procedures, processes, or complex ideas, have students do the following:**

- Discuss the ideas, details, or other contents that they should include to help them generate new ideas about what to say and how to organize it when they begin to write.

#### **To help your English Language Learners, try this one thing:**

- Break the process into stages, providing students with examples and instruction at each stage before moving on to the next to ensure they understand and are doing the work correctly.



## Common Core Writing Standard 2

### Academic Vocabulary: Key Words and Phrases

**Audience’s knowledge of the topic:** This phrase emphasizes clarity in writing; thus, if writers ignore the audience’s lack or excess of knowledge about a topic, he or she risks confusing or insulting them.

**Cohesion:** This refers to how well things stick together to create a clear flow from one idea to the next. Generally, the beginning of a sentence should clearly connect to the words at the end of the previous sentence as the writing unfolds.

**Complex ideas:** Since students will be writing about an idea from multiple perspectives or drawing evidence from multiple sources to support their claims about a text or subject, writing about such complex ideas, which are often abstract, poses unique challenges.

**Concrete details:** This refers to specific details that refer to actual objects or places; it is the difference between Thomas Jefferson declaring the British guilty of “repeated injuries and usurpations” and listing the crimes committed by the British under its “absolute Tyranny” against the American colonies in the Declaration of Independence.

**Domain-specific vocabulary:** When writing about any topic or text in a specific subject, writers must explain or describe it using the language of that discipline if they are to be accurate and precise.

**Explanatory texts:** Such texts are defined by their objective: to explain to or to inform the audience about a topic using facts and an objective tone; the writer’s role here is to report what he or she sees.

**Formatting:** Today’s technology allows writers to emphasize ideas, connections, or other details through headers, fonts (style, size, or typeface), color, graphics, and spatial arrangement on the page.

**Graphics:** This includes tables and graphs, charts and images, and infographics, which incorporate many

graphic elements to represent the complexity of a process, idea, or event.

**Narration of historical events, scientific procedures or experiments, or technical processes:** Don’t mistake the word *narration* in this case to refer to a work of literature; rather, it applies here to giving a detailed account, providing an explanation or information about what people did, what they observed, and, by the conclusion, what it all meant during a procedure, a process, or an event.

**Objective tone:** The purpose of informational writing is to inform or explain but not persuade. An objective tone maintains a distance from its subject, interjecting no emotions about the subject.

**Organize ideas and information into broader categories:** Note that this addition to the standard appears in the grade 8 standard, thus, signaling that it is a more complex move for writers and thinkers; specifically, it means zooming out from a subject and viewing it within some larger scheme and set of categories (e.g., moving from details about an artist’s process or a specific creature’s habitat to details about the artist’s work within a larger artistic movement or the creature’s details viewed within the much larger ecosystem to which it belongs).

**Selection, organization, and analysis of content:** Writers choose the most important facts and details about the subject, organizing them to achieve a clear objective, and then analyzing how those elements relate to each other and the larger idea of the paper in general, while also analyzing what each detail contributes to the meaning of that text.

**Transitions:** They connect one sentence or idea to another, allowing writers to express the nature or importance of the relationship between those two ideas.

*Notes*

