

I'm not a robot

































If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? Why? Your best friend has started hanging around a new crowd of people and has been getting into trouble. What do you do? If you were the teacher for the day, what would you do? Would you make any changes in your class? Why? When you are a parent, what is one thing that you are going to do differently from your parents? Why? If you could go anywhere on a class field trip, where would you like to go? Why? If dogs could get together as a group and demand one thing from humans, what do you think it would be? Imagine you are leaving your friend a note about how to prepare your favorite meal or snack. Write down exactly what your friend should do. Imagine that you are the only survivor of a plane crash. You find yourself alone on a remote island that is inhabited only by dinosaurs. What do you do? Imagine that the Board of Education has proposed that elementary schools no longer have recess. Write a letter to the Board of Education either supporting or opposing the proposal. Imagine you have invented a gadget that does something really cool. What does it do? What is it called? What does it look like? Do you think that kids learn better and learn more when they do more homework? Why or why not? Do you think that kids learn better and learn more when they do more homework? Why or why not? What is the scariest thing you have ever done? Why was it scary? If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be? Why? Imagine that humans have discovered how to control the weather. What do you think would happen? How would countries interact with regards to who wanted what? SharePinterestTweetGoogleMail 5th grade writing doesn't have to be a struggle! This blog post will provide all of my best tips and ideas for teaching your fifth graders to succeed as writers. I've had classes where writing was a struggle all year long. I've also had classes where I'd swear my students were one step away from writing professionally. Your groups will never be the same and that's just roll with it! Take heart in the fact that when students leave your class at the end of the year, they will be MUCH better writers than when they entered in the fall. No matter how good (or bad) my students are at writing when 5th grade begins, we always start at the very beginning and work on writing strong sentences. This post will give you a step-by-step breakdown of how I help my students move from dull to dazzling sentences: How to Help Your Students Write Better Sentences Once they've got the hang of writing an excellent sentence, then we move on. Your class may move slowly or quickly but be sure to watch their writing closely for clues that you may need to slow down. You need to know where you're going to know how you should plan the journey. So, the next section lays out my end-of-the-year goals for my 5th grade writers. Everything I do all year leads to the completion of these goals. By the time my students walk out of my classroom for the last time 1. I want them to be able to efficiently organize their ideas and plan/write a five paragraph essay. 2. I want my students to be able to construct narrative, informative, and opinion essays. 3. I want my students to be able to choose appropriate sources and write a simple research report. 4. I want my students to be able to closely read two paired passages and write an essay in response to a prompt. If you're looking for a hyperlinked pdf version of my pacing and sequence for 5th grade writing, click the link below to have it sent to your email address. As a bonus, you'll become a member of my weekly VIP email club just for upper elementary teachers. Give students a simple prompt and ask for a response in a paragraph or two. Emphasize to students that you're not grading writing samples for grammar, spelling, or structure. You are interested in the quality of their ideas. This writing sample will be valuable as the year goes on. Your students will improve so much that their first samples will (hopefully) be pathetic compared to their new, improved writing pieces. I usually whip out their first samples after we've written a few five paragraph essays. Students feel inspired to keep growing their writing skills when they see how far they've come in just a few months. Example Writing Sample Prompts: Describe a talent or characteristic that makes you unique and different. Tell about a time when you set a goal for yourself and reached that goal. Pretend you live in a society where children are required to choose their future career paths in the 5th grade. What path would you choose? Explain. I'll admit it, I'm a little obsessed with writing reference notebooks. We use composition notebooks to create these amazing sources of knowledge and we use them all year long. So, where do we start with creating writing reference notebooks? The beginning section of students' notebooks hold reference materials. I want students to have plenty of resources at their fingertips to improve their sentence writing, including alternatives for overused words and my specialty, sparkle words. Sparkle words are words that are just a little bit special and make my students' writing shine, like scandalous, embrace, and intriguing. Other ways that my students use their writing reference notebooks: Writing journal entries Creating a personal thesaurus Writing topics & ideas list Taking notes on writing skills lessons Writing first drafts of longer assignments This resource will give you an idea of the printable pages that I use for students' notebooks: Writing Interactive Notebook Reference Pages Do I take grades on students' writing reference notebooks? Not really. I want these notebooks to be a safe space for students to jot ideas and take risks with their first drafts. I do sometimes take a participation grade on their notebooks. This encourages students to keep their notebooks organized and up to date. When teaching 5th grade, you can expect students to start the year writing complete sentences, right?! No, sorry. Whether it's the long break or maybe your students' 4th grade teachers never required a lick of writing, your 5th graders will often begin the year with less-than-stellar sentences. So, I just plan to start with sentences first every year. We work on building and expanding sentences for about two weeks. Yes, two weeks probably seems like a really long time, but spectacular sentences are the foundation for creating great writers. To improve my students' sentences, I take the basic, simple sentences that students write and we work on adding more specific details and interest. First, I give students a list of five nouns and ask them to write one sentence using each noun. I usually get sentences similar to these: Pie is my favorite dessert. My dad's car is red. I wear my jacket when it is cold. This school is a nice place to learn. The tree is tall. This is where I want students to get in their sentence-writing before moving on: Pecan, cherry, apple, or pumpkin? Any type of pie is delicious! My dad spends his Saturdays washing and shining up his candy apple red Jeep. A puffy, hooded jacket is the first thing I reach for on chilly mornings. My school, North Hills Elementary, has the best teachers and students. The tall Redwood tree in my front yard is a welcome sight to visitors and makes my house look spectacular. I vividly remember being in 5th grade myself and writing long papers on the most boring topics ever, like The Science of Light and The History of Mapmaking. Snooze fest! I vowed to never do that to my students. Instead, I took a different route. Students absolutely need to learn to write full reports and five paragraph essays, but they don't need to do this every week. They do, however, need to continually practice writing. I find that if I make writing assignments engaging, my students don't complain and actually seem to enjoy writing. I assign Weekly Writing Choice Boards. This writing has made all the difference in my classroom! Students are now excited about writing class. They see writing as a treat and a fun way to express their thoughts and opinions. I hand out a new choice board every week and students must complete three assignments from the board. I don't grade these on perfect grammar, spelling, or punctuation, instead I look for ideas and effort. Even imperfect writing practice will improve your students' writing skills tremendously! Enter your first name and email address below for a free set of 6 Weekly Writing Choice Boards! The pdf file will be sent directly to your inbox. As a bonus, you'll become a member of my weekly VIP email club just for upper elementary teachers. If you teach social studies in addition to writing, this blog post will give you a bunch of engaging social studies journal entries that will help you tie social studies into your writing instruction. Student need to practice proofreading and editing their writing (and the writing of other students) near the beginning of the school year. Repeatedly practicing the steps of the proofreading/editing process will help your students to internalize this procedure. You'll find that they will start to catch their mistakes earlier and more independently. I find it valuable to establish and consistently use a common proofreading language in my classroom. It takes a little time up front to teach students the markings and meanings of the proofreading marks and practice that I use in my classroom: Proofreading and Editing Activity Pack Asking your students to proofread and edit their own writing is a must but it's also a good thing to have students pair up and look over a partner's writing also. Your students will receive valuable feedback on their writing, editing ideas, and they'll get to see some writing styles that are a little different from their own. Simple Paragraphs Once my students are stellar sentence writers, we move to simple paragraphs. The simple paragraphs that I use with students consist of a topic sentence, three detail sentences, and a closing sentence. Starting with simple paragraphs is much less threatening than jumping straight into five paragraph essays, so I find that spending some time helping students write excellent simple paragraphs is the perfect bridge into essays. Additionally, we color-code our simple paragraphs. This allows students to think critically about what sentence types they have written and provides a visual for students (and for me) to see that all required parts of the paragraph are included. The color-code I use with students: Topic sentence (green), 3 detail sentences (yellow), Closing sentence (red). Planning and Writing Body Paragraphs Once students are able to write great simple paragraphs, we dive into the planning and writing of body paragraphs. This isn't too much of a jump for students because the body paragraphs are structured similarly to the simple paragraphs that we have practiced over and over. The only difference is that they are using one prompt to write three body paragraphs. Many teachers think they have to start with the first paragraph of the essay, the introduction paragraph. This isn't what I recommend. Starting by teaching students to write the three body paragraphs helps to steer the rest of the essay. Adding an Introduction Paragraph Now that students are able to write their three body paragraphs, it's time to add the introduction paragraph. The introduction paragraph contains a hook, commentary, and a thesis sentence. The hook is a sentence (or two) that hooks readers and builds interest in the upcoming essay. I teach my students several types of hooks, including quotes, questions, bold statements, or sharing a memory. After the hook, I ask students to write a sentence or two of commentary on the hook or on the prompt in general. This helps to bulk up their introduction paragraph a bit and make it more interesting. The final part of the introduction paragraph is the thesis sentence. Because students already learned to write the body paragraphs, crafting a thesis sentence is so much easier. The formula for writing a thesis sentence: Restate the prompt briefly + detail 1 + detail 2 + detail 3. Additionally, I teach transition teams at this point. Students need to use a transition word or phrase at the beginning of each body paragraph, so that's where transition teams come in. Transition teams are sets of three transition words or phrases that work well together. Examples of transition teams: First, Second, Finally; To begin, To continue, To end; One reason, Another reason, A final reason. Adding a Conclusion Paragraph When the conclusion paragraph day finally arrives, my students are so excited because they can finally write an entire five paragraph essay. In my opinion, conclusion paragraphs are super easy to teach because they only have two parts. Here's the conclusion paragraph formula: Write the thesis sentence in a different way + add a closing thought. I allow students to be creative with their closing thoughts. I tell them that this is the final thought that your readers will take with them, so it needs to relate well to your entire essay while being engaging and thought-provoking for readers. Some examples of closing thoughts are calls to action, quotes, personal opinions, and brief personal experiences. Teach, Discuss, & Practice with Rubrics I inform my students that from this point on in their school journey, they will be graded with rubrics fairly often. This is a good time to learn about rubrics and become familiar with them. I create or find five paragraph essay samples that are good, bad, and in-between. We read and examine the samples as a class and circle the applicable parts of the rubric. If students are able to grade a few assignments using a rubric, it's not this unknown, scary thing anymore. Grading Are you grading every single word and making a million corrections on students' essays? I give you permission to stop doing that! You are going to burn yourself out and get to where you hate grading and teaching writing. To be honest, your students will not become better writers when their papers are marked all over with suggestions in the margins. Help! I need more support Please visit the following blog post for in-depth explanations and examples of my five paragraph essay teaching and grading process: Tips for Teaching and Grading Five Paragraph Essays This resource will provide you with a full, scaffolded unit that will help you to teach the five paragraph essay process to your students! Five Paragraph Essay Instructional Unit As much as we'd like to just have our students write simple, straightforward five paragraph essays all year, that's just not feasible. But I promise, once your students can crank out those five paragraph essays on simple topics, moving to other modes of writing is no sweat! In my classroom, we spend time learning to write opinion essays, narrative essays, and informative essays. I start with opinion writing because my students have a lot of opinions, haha! We channel those opinions into five paragraph essay format. The skills involved in writing a research report are valuable for 5th graders. They need to be able to judge the reliability of sources and cite their sources properly. Research reports also teach students to organize their ideas, take notes, make an outline, write a draft, and create a final report. I'd like to point you to the following blog post where I detailed my entire process for teaching research reports. The Step-By-Step Guide to Teaching Research Reports 5th graders are too young to compare two passages and write a response. Right?! No, this is not true at all. I think that reading paired passages and using them to craft a written response is a valuable skill for 5th graders. Steps to analyzing paired passages and writing an essay to answer a prompt: First, dissect the prompt. Second, closely read the paired texts. Third, organize thoughts using the prompt. The following blog post explains my paired passage writing steps in detail. Take a moment to check it out. You'll be glad you did! How to Teach Writing Using Paired Passages Don't stress! This sequence and pacing guide is hyperlinked and ready to be sent to your email address. Go to the bottom of this blog post to request the guide. 1st Month of School We start school in the middle of the month, so I only have two weeks to teach during the first month of school. This is the rundown for the remainder of the month: Month 1, Week 3 The first week of the school year is all about teaching and practicing procedures. Teach it right or teach it all year! Classroom Procedures I recommend you check out this blog post: 5 Tips for Establishing Procedures in the Upper Elementary Classroom Welcome Activities Welcome to 5th Grade: First Week of School Activities Blog Post Back to School Writing Prompts for 5th Graders Month 1, Week 4 During this week, I review and continue practicing procedures with students but we do go ahead and start working on writing. I establish my expectations and procedures for my students' Weekly Writing Choice Boards. We set up writing notebooks together, including the table of contents, cover page, and an About the Author page. Obtain a writing sample. We start working on improving sentences. 2nd Month of School Month 2, Week 1 We continue working on improving sentences. Start proofreading/editing instruction and practice. Month 2, Week 2 Review the process for writing excellent sentences. Finish proofreading/editing instruction and practice. Month 2, Weeks 3-4 Writing simple paragraphs (include color-code) 3rd Month of School Month 3, Weeks 1-2 Planning & writing body paragraphs (include color-code) Month 3, Weeks 3-4 Teach introduction paragraphs Writing introduction plus body paragraphs (include color-code) Transition teams 4th Month of School Month 4, Weeks 1-2 Teach students how to write conclusion paragraphs. Students will write their first full five paragraphs this week. Month 4, Weeks 3-4 Write 5 paragraph essays with a variety of basic prompts. Have students proofread/edit other students' essays. Provide mini-lessons on grammar structure or other issues you are noticing in students' writing. 5th Month of School This is where our winter break falls, so I only have two weeks to teach this month. This is a great time to review what we've been working on all year and assign some fun journal prompts. Also, writing mini-lessons are good fillers for this time. This Winter Writing Project is a student favorite right before winter break! 6th Month of School Month 6, Week 1 When we come back from winter break, I like to teach the research report process. I spend a week teaching the process and giving students time to research while I'm there to help. The Step-By-Step Guide to Teaching Research Reports Month 6, Week 2 Students complete their research reports, including outlines, citing sources, and etc. I ask my students to do super quick presentations on their research topics. It's 1-2 minutes max. I don't want them to read their reports aloud because that's boring. Instead, I want them to quickly highlight what they learned about their topics and what was fascinating to them. Month 6, Week 3 We review the five paragraph essay process and write/proofread/edit an essay with a simple prompt. Month 6, Week 4 I start opinion writing this week. You'll find that students will slide into opinion writing easily because they already know five paragraph essay structure. 7th Month of School Month 7, Week 1 Continue working on opinion writing. By the end of this week, students should be able to write an opinion essay using a prompt. Month 7, Weeks 2-3 We spend two weeks on narrative writing. By the end of the second week, students should be able to write a narrative essay using a prompt. Month 7, Week 4 This week, I teach the process of writing an informative essay. 8th Month of School Month 8, Week 1 Continue working on informative essays. Students should be able to write an informative essay using a prompt by the end of this week. Month 8, Weeks 2-3 Teach students how to write an essay using paired passages. First, dissect the prompt. Second, closely read the paired texts. Third, organize thoughts using the prompt. For more information on how I teach the steps above, visit this blog post: How to Teach Writing Using Paired Passages Month 8, Week 4 Now that students know the process of using paired passages, I provide a set of paired passages and ask students to answer prompts in a variety of genres, like opinion, narrative, informative, poetry, and etc. This resource makes it easy: Paired Passages with Writing Prompts and Activities Bundle 9th Month of School Month 9, Week 1 Continue working on using paired passages to write in a variety of genres. Talk about last minute standardized testing tips to help students with their writing tests. The rest of the month is taken up with standardized testing, so I do a lot of review activities, free writing, and etc. I do have a set of suspense stories that my students love to write during this month. Check them out here: Suspense Stories Bundle 10th Month of School During this month, we are wrapping up the year. Students participate in multiple activities and field trips, so there's not much teaching time. If you are still feeling overwhelmed, don't dismay. Instructing young, inexperienced writers is a challenge. Just work on one step at a time to avoid overwhelming yourself and your students. Once you've taught writing for a year or two, you'll feel like an old pro. Promise! Are you that teacher saying, Oh my goodness, please just give me the print n go pages so that I can start teaching writing tomorrow?! It's all here for you: Math Reading Kindergarten Vocabulary Spelling by Grade Grade 1 Grade 2 Grade 3 Grade 4 Grade 5 Grammar & Writing Science Science by Grade Kindergarten Grade 1 Grade 2 Grade 3 Cursive | Bookstore