

# Information about Expository Writing

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## What is Expository Writing?

Exposition is a type of oral or written discourse that is used to explain, describe, give information or inform. The creator of an expository text can not assume that the reader or listener has prior knowledge or prior understanding of the topic that is being discussed. One important point to keep in mind for the author is to try to use words that clearly show what they are talking about rather than blatantly telling the reader what is being discussed. Since clarity requires strong organization, one of the most important mechanisms that can be used to improve our skills in exposition is to provide directions to improve the organization of the text.

## What are some Expository Organizational Patterns

In order to give you more information about oral and written exposition we have provided you with eight different examples of expository organizational patterns. You will find that most of these organizational patterns are very familiar to you. You may have never really considered them to be "kind" of organizational patterns. As you read through the different types of organizational patterns that are presented below, try to figure out how many of these organizational patterns do you already find yourself writing or speaking on a daily basis?

Pattern	Description	Cue Words	Graphical Organizer/Sample Passages
Circumlocution	Depicts a pattern in which the speaker discusses a topic, then diverts to discuss a related but different topic.		<a href="#">View</a>
Narrative Interspersion	A pattern or a sub-pattern imbedded in other patterns in which the speaker or writer intersperses a narrative within the expository text for specific purposes, including to clarify, or elaborate on a point or to link the subject matter to a personal experience.		<a href="#">View</a>
	When the speaker discusses a topic, then restates		

Recursion	it using different words or symbolism. It is used to drive home a point and to give special emphasis to the text.	<a href="#">View</a>
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(Ball, 1991, "Organizational Patterns in the Oral and Written Language of African American Adolescents", adapted from dissertation submitted to Stanford University.)

Pattern	Description	Cue Words	Graphical Organizer/Sample Passages
Description	The author describes a topic by listing characteristics, features, and examples	for example, characteristics are	<a href="#">View</a>
Sequence	The author lists items or events in numerical or chronological order.	first, second, third; next; then; finally	<a href="#">View</a>
Comparison	The author explains how two or more things are alike and/or how they are different.	different; in contrast; alike; same as; on the other hand	<a href="#">View</a>
Cause and Effect	The author lists one or more causes and the resulting effect or effects.	reasons why; if...then; as a result; therefore; because	<a href="#">View</a>
Problem and Solution	The author states a problem and lists one or more solutions for the problem. A variation of this pattern is the question- and-answer format in which the author poses a question and then answers it.	problem is; dilemma is; puzzle is solved; question... answer	<a href="#">View</a>

(permissions pending, Tompkins)

## Why teach exposition?

Let's think about the type of writing that most of us encounter in our daily lives. When you pick up and read a non-fiction book, magazines, or newspaper article the author uses expository writing to inform

<http://www.stanford.edu/%7Eearnetha/expowrite/info.html>

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## Writing Workshop

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[ISAT Writing](#) | [Great Beginnings](#) | [Effective Endings](#) | [Expository Prompts](#) | [Expository Sample](#) | [Expository Checklists](#)

### **ISAT Writing: Expository**

# Fifteen focused lessons to launch an Expository Writing Genre Study

We have encouraged teachers to use a writing workshop format all year long to help students become life-long competent writers. The format of a writing workshop is as follows:

Mini-lesson: 5-10 minutes  
Writing & Conferring: 20-40 minutes  
Sharing: 5-15 minutes

All writing for this genre study is done outside the writer's notebook.

Because reading and writing are so intertwined, the lessons in this plan are written for the Reading Workshop as well as the Writing Workshop. Children need to hear lots of expository writing before they can learn to write it well. The format of a reading workshop is as follows:

Mini-lesson: 5-15 minutes  
Reading Work: 30-45 minutes (includes independent & guided reading & conferences)  
Wrap-Up/Sharing: 5 minutes

This plan follows the "gradual release of responsibility model." It is designed to give students a great deal of support in the beginning, then gradually release the responsibility to the students.

During this genre study, there will be opportunities for:

- orally working through expository essays. (Students should have many opportunities to talk "long and well" prior to writing.)
- writing expository essays in a teaching situation. (We're not testing them every time we ask them to write a paper. Instead, during the 40-minutes when students are writing, we are pinpointing areas of need and teaching for improvement in individual conferences.)
- writing expository essays in a testing situation. (From the pre-assessment, you will determine the focus of future mini-lessons. After the post-assessment, you will determine whether or not to extend the genre study for further explicit teaching. Consider bringing these noted areas of need into a normal writing workshop mini-lesson.)

The following components of expository writing will be taught with this plan:

- An outline
- An introduction with a focus statement
- Two support paragraphs with details
- A closing

Read through the entire plan and decide how to make this plan work for you. It is not meant to be a script. You may want to rearrange the order, or eliminate certain lessons based on what you know about your class. You may have your own ideas about how to teach the focus of the mini-lessons. As you are personalizing this plan, you will need to use your own writing as a model.

At the completion of this study, students should be encouraged to try expository writing on their own in their notebooks, beginning with an outline and using the checklists as they write. These expository pieces will therefore be the students' choice, and published pieces may be kept in a special place for others to read.

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## Lessons:

- **WEEK ONE (Demonstrated and Shared Writing)**
  - Pre-Assessment
  - 1 Mini-lesson focus:
    - Reading Workshop: Getting a feel for expository writing;
    - Writing Workshop: Defining expository writing; writing an outline
  - 2 Mini-lesson focus:
    - Reading Workshop: Determining focus, main ideas, and supporting text;
    - Writing Workshop: Writing a paragraph for the first idea; using details/examples
  - 3 Mini-lesson focus:

- Reading Workshop: Word Choice/Specificity
- Writing Workshop: Writing a paragraph for the second idea; writing with specificity
- 4 Mini-lesson focus:
  - Reading Workshop: Examining introductions
  - Writing Workshop: Writing an introduction
- 5 Mini-lesson focus:
  - Reading Workshop: Examining closings
  - Writing Workshop: Writing a closing
  
- **WEEK TWO (Guided Writing)**
  - 6 Mini-lesson focus:
    - Reading Workshop: Practice developing a focus statement
    - Writing Workshop: Creating an outline
  - 7 Mini-lesson focus:
    - Reading Workshop: Examining introductions
    - Writing Workshop: Writing an introduction
  - 8 Mini-lesson focus:
    - Reading Workshop: Getting specific
    - Writing Workshop: Writing two support paragraphs of the expository paper
  - 9 Mini-lesson focus:
    - Reading Workshop: Examining closings
    - Writing Workshop: Writing a closing
  - 10 Mini-lesson focus:
    - Reading Workshop: What did the author do well?
    - Writing Workshop: Using a checklist to evaluate your writing
  
- **WEEK THREE (Guided and Independent Writing)**
  - Lesson 11 Mini-lesson focus:
    - Reading Workshop: Different introductions
    - Writing Workshop: Creating a fast outline; Writing an introduction; Using a checklist
  - Lesson 12 Mini-lesson focus:
    - Reading Workshop: Extending your sentences
    - Writing Workshop: Writing two support paragraphs; revising on the go
  - Lesson 13 Mini-lesson focus:
    - Reading Workshop: Varying sentence beginnings
    - Writing Workshop: Writing a closing; revising on the go
  - Lesson 14 Mini-lesson focus:

- Reading Workshop: Varying sentence length
- Writing Workshop: Editing your writing
- Lesson 15 Mini-lesson focus: **Post-Assessment**
  - Writing Workshop: Writing an expository paper in a timed setting

