



# Materiales de Contenido



**ENGLISH**

**Grades 6–8 and 11**

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## **General Introduction**

This educational content material, which is aligned with the alternate assessment skills of the DEPR, is pedagogical material containing several of the elements and resources necessary to model the alternate skills. It specifies how these skills can be developed in the classroom for students with significant cognitive impairments.

Within this content material, you will find educational activities and strategies that are developed in line with the pace and skills of special education students. These activities and strategies are aligned with the general curriculum, PRCS 2014, and adapted to the skills of the grade level being measured in the alternate assessment.

This document was created in consonance with the content content material posted by the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC). The NCSC conducts an alternate assessment aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

# Informational Writing Content Material

## I. PLANNING THE ACADEMIC ACTIVITY

### A. Rationale

Effective communication is an essential lifelong skill. In fact, “writing skill[s] [are] a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and in the global economy” (Graham and Perin, 2007, p. 3). According to Graham and Perin, “all students need to become proficient and flexible writers” (2007, p. 7). However, writing instruction has typically been neglected (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 9). With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), National Governors Association [NGA] and the Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010) in forty-one states, there is a renewed emphasis on writing instruction. The CCSS specify three main types of writing: narrative, expository, and argumentative. This content material will focus specifically on expository writing.

### B. Content Material Goal

The goal of this content material is to provide detailed information on expository writing to teachers of students with cognitive impairments at the primary and secondary school level. This content material aims to provide teachers with a general overview of three concepts as well as teaching suggestions to aid the teacher in instruction planning for these concepts. This content material also provides instructors with potential adaptations and modifications to consider when designing materials and instruction for students with severe cognitive impairments.

### C. Content Material Objectives

After viewing the content material, special education teachers will:

- develop an understanding of some essential principles of effective writing instruction, which will enrich both the writing process and expository writing results.
- become familiar with expository writing components and instructional strategies to teach students to effectively develop expository writing skills.

This Content material is organized using the following sections: Before the Lesson, During the Lesson, and After the Lesson. Key vocabulary is provided in the “Before the Lesson” section of

the Content material. Examples from the Puerto Rico Core Standards and presentations containing information and instructional suggestions for teaching about expository writing are shared in the “During the Lesson” section. The “After the Lesson” section provides strategies to review, reinforce, and apply expository writing in real-world situations.

## **II. BEFORE THE LESSON**

Understanding the vocabulary used with respect to expository writing is important for both teachers and students in the planning and implementation of writing lessons. As a teacher, understanding and using the terms correctly not only ensures that instruction is consistent with content, but also helps when collaborating with other teachers or literacy experts. It is important for the teacher to select the most salient, important, or frequently used vocabulary terms for each lesson.

Below, you will find a list of vocabulary terms related to this Content material. It may or may not be necessary to provide instruction on all terms if students have learned them previously. If you are unsure whether your students have been taught these vocabulary terms, you may want to review and teach any unknown terms during the focus and review section of your lesson plan. While providing vocabulary instruction, you may consider including pictures or objects to make the instruction more concrete for students with impairments. See ideas to support vocabulary learning below.

### **A. Content Vocabulary**

#### **Key terms**

- main idea – the most important idea in the text
- details – specific smaller elements that are part of a larger work
- key word – essential or significant words related to the text
- text structure – ways in which information within a text is organized to convey the content

#### **Text structure terms**

- cause – something that brings about an action or result

- effect – occurs as a result of the cause
- description – provides information about a given topic
- sequence – a particular order
- problem – something that needs to be solved
- solution – a way to solve the problem
- compare – observe similarities between things
- contrast – observe differences between things

### **Sample text terms**

- heading – the main title at the beginning of the text
- subheading – secondary title that breaks the text into smaller sections
- glossary – a list of key words found in the text
- table of contents – a list of chapters or sections usually found at the beginning of a text
- index – a list of topics usually found at the end of a text
- caption – explanation or description of a given diagram or image
- bold – darker font that is applied to stand out to the reader
- italics – slanted font that is applied to stand out to the reader
- label – a descriptive or identifying word or phrase
- diagram – a drawing, sketch, or chart that makes information easier to understand
- cutaway – omits the top or outside parts so the inside parts can be seen

### **B. Idea to Support Vocabulary Learning**

Use visual depictions or actions to explain expository writing and related terms. For example, the following images may be shared to teach about different types of expository writing, such as “All About” and “How to” texts.



All About Coconuts



How to Use Coconuts



### III. DURING THE LESSON

Before you can begin to teach your students about expository writing, it is important to first have a deep understanding of the information. Some of the concepts may be familiar to you. Below is a chart showing the Writing Standard from the Puerto Rico Core Standards for grades 6–8 and 11 along with the aligned alternate assessment skills. You will also find a series of presentations containing information, examples, and instructional suggestions in the appendices.

#### A. Content Standards Aligned with the Alternate Assessment Skills

Grades	Content Standard	Expectations	Skills
6, 7, 8 & 11	Writing	W.2. Write informational texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content	Write informational texts (compare/contrast, expository) using appropriate text organization
	Writing	W.4. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by using the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, rewriting, or publishing).	Use the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, rewriting, or publishing)

#### B. Universal Design for Learning

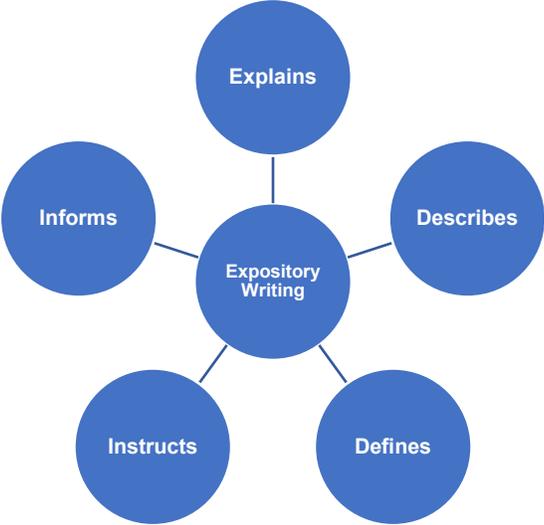
Principles	Impairment Category			
	Visual Impairment or Deaf/Blind	Orthopedic Impairment or Multiple Impairments	Intellectual Impairment	Emotional Impairment
Representation	Rehearse expository writing concepts orally; use a talking device such as an avatar; type with a large	Ask students to scan an array of possible options and use a switch to select a topic, main idea, details, etc.; use	Offer scaffolding to assist students with writing; use sentence starters and graphic organizers; offer	Suggest students research or write about motivating objects (i.e.,

	font; create graphic organizers (i.e., readwritethink.org) with online tools; use picture cards and graphic organizers to organize expository passages; use digital writing modes (MovieMaker, iMovie)	computer representations that can be manipulated with a switch; place key aspects on a slant board or eye gaze board; create a classroom activity in which students are invited to walk or ride in a wheelchair to organize content for expository writing	illustrations and images as springboards for ideas; read structured text to demonstrate basic examples to students; after reading, encourage students to create a backward plan to organize expository passages	puppets or their favorite character, object, etc.); incorporate technology, including computer representations, videos, animations, and talking avatars; allow students to self-select writing paper, tools, and topics for writing
<b>Expression</b>	Ask students to select a topic from limited options (i.e., 2–3 choices); use voice output devices for students to select key aspects such as topic, main idea, details, introduction, and conclusion; teach tangible symbols for these components	Ask students to use a switch to indicate key aspects such as topic, main idea, details, introduction, and conclusion from a limited selection; may use an eye gaze board to select key aspects; may use a blink response to select key aspects from a limited selection; phrase questions so that they require a “yes/no” response, which can easily be answered using a head turn/nod, two switches, etc.	Ask students to select pre-made cards with key aspects such as topic, main idea, details, introduction, and conclusion; use a model to guide writing; ask students “yes/no” questions	Ask students to write with drawings, interactive computer programs, acting out with props, etc.

<b>Engagement</b>	Teach students to use their hands to scan objects; use talking avatars or prompts to elicit student writing; allow students to self-select writing paper, utensils, and online websites to generate writing; encourage students to develop writing that is familiar and reinforcing to students.	Enable students to click to select various aspects of expository writing using a computer with assistive technology; use cards that are large enough to accommodate each student's range of motion; pair each student with another student without a physical impairment and ask them to work together to research, write, and discuss expository passages.	Enable students to use websites and listening centers that read text aloud; use puppets and objects to develop writing skills; focus on real-life experiences to inspire writing (i.e., write a biography that includes information about themselves, research a topic of interest, discuss a field trip, etc.).	Create games in which students interact with partners to match details with appropriate main ideas and topics; develop text and scenarios that engage students by incorporating their interests and experiences.
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**C. Concept Maps**

1. Expository writing



2. Writing process (recursive and flexible)

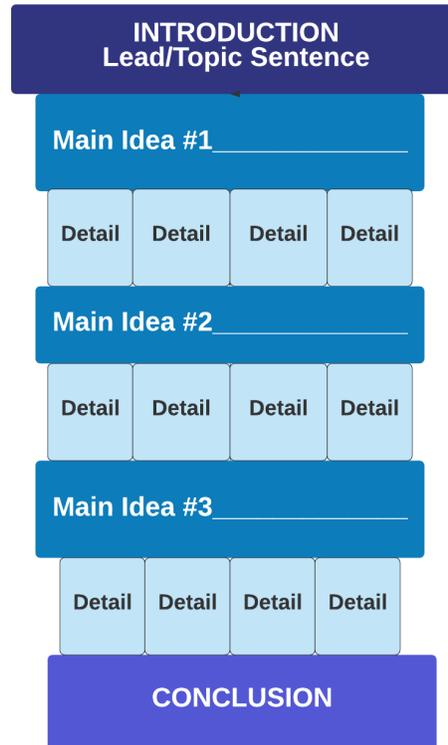


#### D. Graphic Organizers

##### 1. Topic and main ideas

- Topic: Rain Forest
- Main Idea 1: Climate/Weather
- Main Idea 2: Plants/Trees
- Main Idea 3: Animals
- Main Idea 4: Deforestation

## 2. Topic, main ideas, details, and conclusion



### IV. AFTER THE LESSON

Below, you will find ideas for linking expository writing to real-world situations and applications, skills for postsecondary transition addressed through the teaching of these concepts, and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. One way to assist in a special educator's development within this curricular area is by collaborating with other teachers in your building. These skills are often practiced outside of an English classroom in other curricular areas as well as during everyday activities. Some activities with real-world applications include:

- Associate expository writing skills learned in class with the reading of real-world texts by teaching students to pay attention to the writer's craft and read from the writer's perspective. This allows the students to apply their learning to real reading experiences, which supports students' understanding of the relevance of the content and will improve comprehension and writing skills.

- Encourage students to self-select writing topics that are based on their interests or that they are passionate about. This will increase motivation and engagement in the writing process.
- Use and discuss key vocabulary terms that may not be common in the students' language use. This will enhance students' oral language skills, which will also enhance their writing skills.

### **A. Skills for Postsecondary Transition**

In addition to the real-world application of these concepts, the skills taught in this content material also promote the following preparation skills in order to enable these students to make a postsecondary transition.

#### 1. Communicative competence

Students will increase their vocabulary to include concepts related to expository writing. Specifically, they will be learning about concepts such as the main idea, details, and introduction/conclusion.

#### 2. Fluency in reading, writing, and math

Students will have opportunities to enhance their writing and comprehension skills as their awareness of expository writing develops. By strengthening their knowledge about expository writing, students will be able to develop focused, well-organized, and detailed pieces of writing. They will enhance their reading abilities, as reading and writing are reciprocal processes.

#### 3. Age-appropriate social skills

Students will interact with peer groups to conduct research, discover and discuss expository texts, and develop and share their expository writing.

#### 4. Independent work behaviors

Students will write independently. They will gain an increased understanding of expository writing through opportunities to engage in authentic writing experiences.

#### 5. Skills in accessing support systems

Students may sometimes need to ask for assistance to complete expository writing activities. This will offer them opportunities to practice accessing supports and asking for help with expository writing as needed. If the task involves physical movement, they can ask a peer to complete the maneuvers they

are unable to complete themselves. Always encourage students to ask questions. Do not automatically provide them with items or supports.

In addition to collaborating with other special educational professionals in your teacher network, the following list of resources may also provide you with ideas for activities or a more thorough understanding of the concepts presented in this content material.

## **B. Resources/links**

Empowering Writers (2012). Retrieved August 13, 2021 from <http://empoweringwriters.com>. This resource provides special educators with writing ideas and tips for empowering writers.

National Writing Project (2013). Retrieved August 13, 2021 from <http://www.nwp.org/>. The National Writing Project provides articles, lessons, support, and professional development in writing and learning improvement in schools.

Time for Kids (2013). Retrieved June 16, 2013 from <http://www.timeforkids.com>. Ask students to view news stories on this site, gather specific information from the article, and identify the writer's purpose: to inform, to entertain, to clarify, etc.

ReadWriteThink (2013). Retrieved August 13, 2021 from <https://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guide-series/teaching-writing>. This site provides teachers with strategies on ways to get students engaged in expository writing, enabling them to express their needs and desires. The strategy guides in this series are divided by grade levels, ranging from grades K–12.

ReadWriteThink (2013). Retrieved June 29, 2013 from <http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/developing-persuasive-writing-strategies-30965.html>. This resource guide focuses on the development of expository writing techniques and tools (persuasion map, etc.) to use in your classroom as you guide students through the expository writing process.

ReadWriteThink (2013). Retrieved August 13, 2021 from <https://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/write-alouds>. This resource guide provides a strategy to expose young and/or poor writers to experienced writers at work, observing them as a model for more effective writing. Write-aloud lessons or modeled writing will help you provide authentic explanations to your students, demonstrating how writers actually construct various kinds of texts.

## V. REFERENCES

Calkins, L, Ehrenworth, M., and Lehman, C (2012). *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. This text allows teachers to understand what the Common Core Standards do and do not indicate, recognize the guiding principles that support the reading and writing standards, identify how the Common Core infrastructure supports a spiral K–12 literacy curriculum, and examine the context in which the CCSS were written and are being implemented.

Carroll, J. A., and Wilson, E. E. (2008). *Acts of Teaching: How to Teach Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. This text meets the needs of anyone who teaches writing. It provides strategies on the use of writing as a mode of learning across all disciplines and grade levels. Other topics in this text include students, shifts, skills for the global age, the writing and assessment process, and how to teach grammar within the writing process.

Common Core State Standards. <http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/>.

Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010). *Common Core State Standards: Preparing America's Students for College and Career*. Retrieved January 2, 2013 from [http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix\\_C.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_C.pdf).

Gallagher, C.W. and Lee, A. (2008). *Teaching Writing That Matters*. New York, NY: Scholastic. This text offers tools and projects to motivate adolescent writers and encourage student growth through reflection on writing, purposeful and audience-aware projects, and the support of a writing community.

Graham, S., and Perin, D. (2007). *Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools – A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

The National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges. (April 2013). *The Neglected "R": The Need for a Writing Revolution*. The College Board. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED475856>.

Illustrations: <https://unsplash.com>; <https://pixabay.com>.

Paez Wiesen, M. (2012). [\*A Quick Guide to Teaching Informational Writing, Grade 2 \(Workshop Help Desk\)\*](#). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. This unit of study guides teachers through the entire writing process with a focus on informational writing and addresses the wide range of learners found in the second-grade classroom.

Ray, K. W. (2006). "Exploring inquiry as teaching stance in the writing workshop." *Language Arts*. 83(3). An inquiry approach to genre study that repositions curriculum as the outcome of instruction rather than the starting point.

## VI. APPENDICES

### A. Effective Writing Instruction Presentation

#### 1. Principles of Effective Writing Instruction

Students need —

- frequent, predictable, scheduled time to write.
- the freedom to choose their own writing topics.
- authentic opportunities to write for real purposes and audiences.

#### 2. How to Build a Community of Writers

- Teacher as a model
- Teacher as a community member, not a writing teacher
- Safe space where children feel comfortable writing
- Building trust
- Taking risks as writers together
- Studying the work of other writers

#### 3. Reading Like a Writer

- Give students exposure to and experience with genres.
- Offer opportunities for students to study and read the genre they choose to write.
- Ask students to examine exceptional examples from literature, pay attention to the writer's techniques and craft, and study the text structure.
- Generate a chart to list the elements of quality narratives.

#### 4. Awareness of Text Structures

- Ask students to practice wide reading and reading aloud to gain familiarity with text structure (how the writers organize their stories).
- Examine story structure (organized in predictable ways).
- Understanding story structure can also improve students' comprehension.

#### 5. Reading and Writing Connection

- Reading stories
- Talking about stories
- Retelling stories
- Writing stories

#### 6. Scaffolding Students' Writing Experiences

- Shared Writing
  - Teacher and students create the text together, but the teacher does the actual writing.
- Interactive Writing
  - Teacher and students create the text together and share the pen to do the writing.

- Guided Writing
  - Teacher plans and teaches a lesson to a small group.
- Independent Writing
  - Students engage in the writing process to produce their own self-selected writings.

#### 7. What Writers Do to Develop Their Writing

- Read like writers
- Research topics
- Visit places such as museums or museum websites
- Interview family members or experts
- Immerse themselves in a culture
- Eavesdrop
- Observe
- Learn a skill
- Gather artifacts

#### B. Expository Writing Presentation

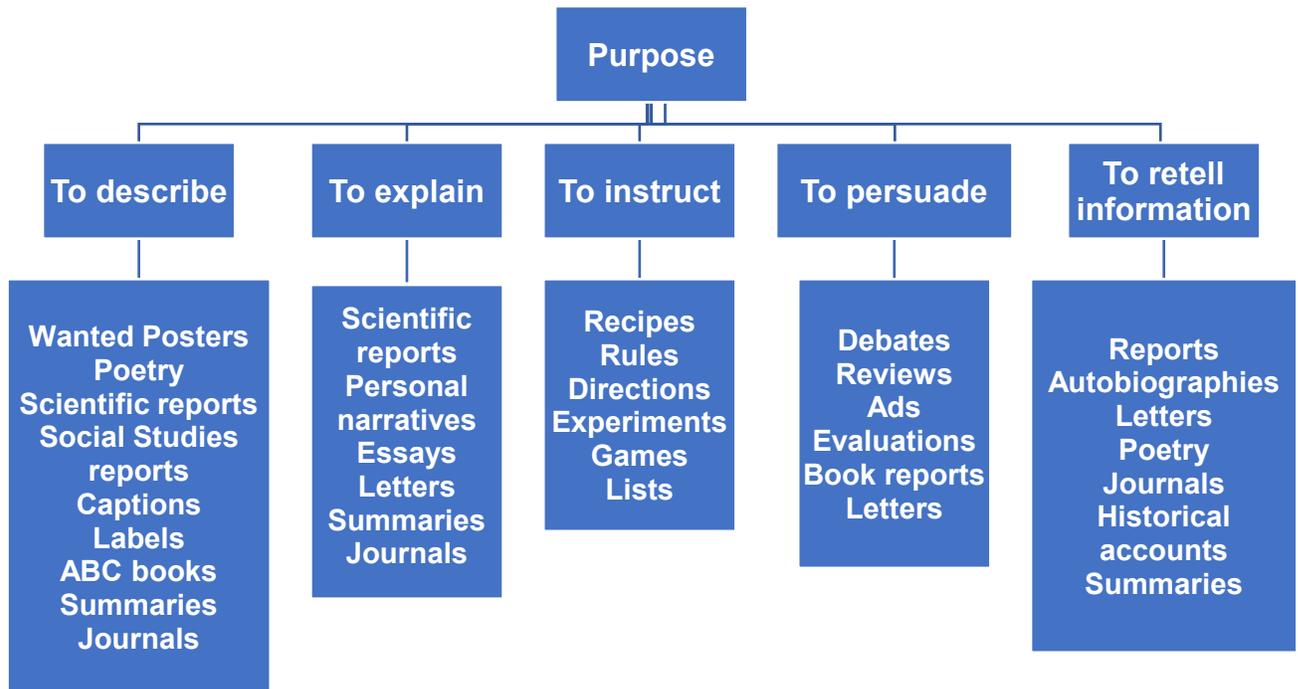
##### 1. What is expository writing?

- Often used in school and in real-world careers
- Factual writing for the purpose of informing others
- Collection and synthesis of information to inform an audience
- Organizes information for readers in a straightforward, logical, and sequential way
- Uses graphic organizers for planning

##### 2. Why expository writing?

- To share our expertise with others and develop self-confidence and self-esteem
- To write for a wider audience with authentic purposes
- To develop an understanding of a topic of study
- To enhance vocabulary, visual literacy, and the use of technology
- To demonstrate the ability to write in different textual forms
- To take ownership for learning about our world and share that knowledge with others
- To develop strategies for content development and find ways to organize and synthesize our learning
- To build curiosity for the world through inquiry
- To present choices (nonfiction or fiction)

### 3. Purposes and Types of Expository Writing



### 4. Types of Expository Writing

- “All About” Writing
  - Share what you know about a subject.
  - Use descriptive structure with a main idea and details.
    - After reading about coconuts, I learned . . .
- “How to” Writing
  - Share how to do something.
  - Use step-by-step sequential structure.
    - How to make coconut popsicles



### 5. Points Writers Should Consider

- Identify and understand the topic
  - Do I understand the topic and what I am expected to do?
- Develop a thesis
  - Can I craft a statement that clearly expresses the focus of my written response?
- Select and analyze relevant content
  - What information supports my thesis?
- Convey ideas clearly and precisely
  - Can the reader follow the association between my text and my thesis? Are my supporting points clear?

- Determine the best organizational structure
  - What is the best structure for developing my thesis?

## 6. Useful Skills for Expository Writing

- **Organization** – Understand the format and features of this kind of writing.
- **Crafting clear main ideas** – The body is made up of paragraphs, each defined by a main idea. Each main idea is explored through a variety of supporting facts and details.
- **Supporting details** – Avoid simply creating a “grocery list” of facts. Expand on facts with details. Incorporate powerful techniques for showing rather than telling, which may include the use of quotes, anecdotes, and statistics.
- **Introduction/conclusion** – Set a purpose for reading that engages and interests the reader.

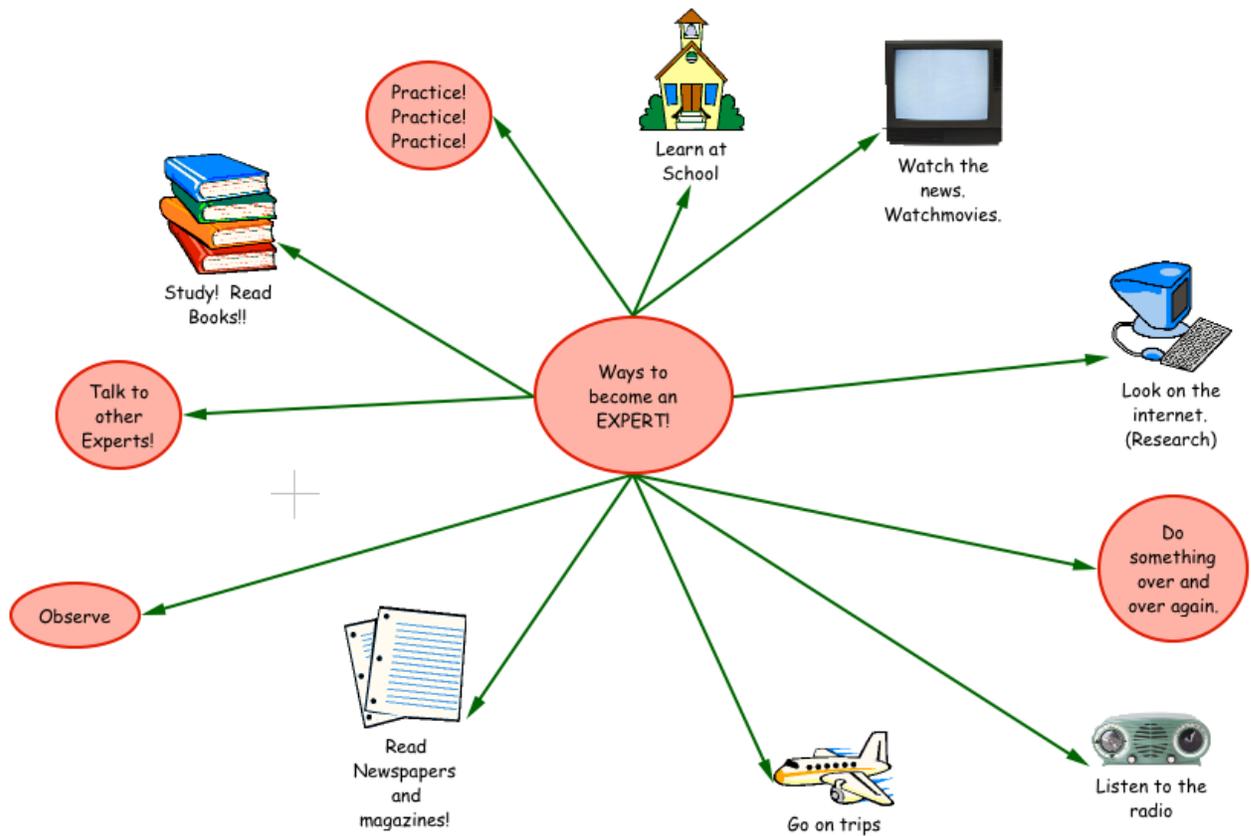
## 7. Organization

- Information is arranged and presented in a logical, sequential manner with similar details grouped together (See Graphic Organizers section above).
  - Introduction – grabs the reader’s attention (lead) and tells the reader what the entire piece will be about (topic sentence)
  - Body – a number of paragraphs, each with a general yet distinct main idea sentence that explains what the paragraph is about, followed by a variety of supporting details
  - Conclusion – the final paragraph, which creatively reiterates the main ideas and broadly restates the thesis or topic sentence

## 8. Generating Ideas

- Help students find a topic they are interested in and are knowledgeable about.
- *“The best nonfiction writing and research begins with a writer’s passionate curiosity about a subject.”* – J. Portalupi





## 9. Detail-Generating Questions

An important part of any expository piece is the details that support the main ideas. To help explain the main ideas in greater depth, we use detail-generating questions.

- What does it look/sound/feel/taste/smell/seem like?
- Why is it important (for your main idea)?
- Is each detail in a separate sentence?
- Did you give specific examples (avoid words such as “stuff” and “things”)?

## 10. Essentials for Teaching Expository Writing

- Teach readers a lot of information and get them interested in it.
- Use both textual and non-textual elements to teach information.
- Nonfiction texts have a predictable topic and subtopic structure.
- Nonfiction texts have specific vocabulary.

## 11. Your turn!

Now ask yourself:

- What is expository writing?
- What is the purpose of expository writing?

## 12. Check for Understanding

- What is expository writing?
  - **Factual writing for the purpose of informing others**
- What is the purpose of expository writing?
  - **To collect and synthesize information to be conveyed to an audience**