



Lesson 6 Improving Paragraphs

Rationale, Summary, and Objective

Many students struggle with every line they need to write to create a strong paragraph. Students can become frustrated when they do not know what information they should include.

In this lesson, students will learn a strategy that will help them include more specific information in every paragraph they write. First, students will look for places in the existing sentences where they may be able to add sensory details. Then they will look for places in their writing where they can add new sentences to help support their ideas.



Lesson 6 Improving Paragraphs

Today you will learn how to improve the paragraphs in your essay.

Improving Paragraphs

- 1 Add sensory details to your sentences.
- 2 Add new sentences that answer the 5Ws + H.

Sensory details show how something feels, sounds, smells, looks, or tastes. Add new sentences that answer the 5Ws + H.

5Ws + H	Example
Who?	I asked my best friend for help. Her name is Karina and she volunteers at the local community center. She helps first-grade students make crafts every day after school. That's the kind of person she is.
What?	The present was wrapped in shiny, gold paper and had a big red bow on the top of it.
When?	It was a cool, rainy day in spring; Thursday, April 17th, to be exact.
Where?	The store is at the end of the block, past the laundromat and the car wash, right next to the tall oak tree.
Why?	Luis left his home in Texas and moved to Illinois when he was four because his dad was promoted to a new job in Chicago.
How?	I quickly ran down the stairs in a total panic. My feet couldn't move fast enough!



Instruction

(approx. 15 min.)

Introduce the lesson objective.

- Acknowledge that it can be difficult to know what information to include in each paragraph.
- Explain that in this lesson, students will learn a strategy for improving every paragraph they write.

Introduce the strategy.

- Call students' attention to the during-writing icon. Explain that Improving Paragraphs is a during-writing strategy.
- Read through the steps of Improving Paragraphs with students.

Point out the text below the strategy.

- Explain that sensory details are details about the five senses (touch, sound, smell, sight, and taste). Inform students that by adding sensory details to sentences they have already written, they can make their paragraphs more specific.
- Tell students that in addition to adding sensory details to existing sentences, they should look for places in their paragraphs where they can add new sentences.
- Explain that by using the 5Ws + H (Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How), students can think of new sentences that can improve their paragraphs.
- Read through the examples in the table with students. Point out the use of sensory details in the examples (i.e., "shiny, gold paper" and "cool, rainy day").

Teacher's Note

Consider posting the 5Ws + H questions on a bulletin board in your classroom to serve as inspiration for students as they write.



Tell students what to look for during the modeling of the strategy.

- Read the Notice This! points with students.
- Remind students that they will complete the What Did You Notice? report *after* the modeling of the strategy.

Model Improving Paragraphs for students by guiding them through Writer A's work on this page.

1 Add sensory details to your sentences.

- Point out that this writer added sensory details to the word “pictures” by adding the words “bright” and “vivid” to describe how the pictures *look*, and to the word “music” by adding the words “crystal clear” to describe how the music *sounds*.

2 Add new sentences that answer the 5Ws + H.

- Point out that the first sentence makes a claim that the Internet has made a huge difference in people’s lives. By asking *Why* this writer added a new sentence with more specific information (i.e., because information about any subject is available at our fingertips).
- Explain that the second sentence the writer added relates to the sentence right before it and answers the question *How* (i.e., by using blogs and email, we can respond to information we find on the Internet).

looks (“bright, vivid”) and sounds (“crystal clear”)

Why (“Why has the internet made a huge difference in the lives of people?”) and How (“How can we respond to information we find on the Internet?”)



Notice This!

- Watch how the writer adds sensory details to sentences.
- Pay attention to the new sentences the writer adds.

Why? Add a new sentence.

Writer A added specific information to support the ideas presented.

The Internet has made a huge difference in the lives of

people everywhere. Information about almost any subject is

available at our fingertips. We can view bright, vivid pictures

and hear crystal clear music. We can find and respond to

information. Using blogs and email, we can respond to others

on the Internet from the comfort of our own homes. Millions

of people are able to take a more active role in communicating with

the rest of the world through the Internet.

Add sensory details.

How? Add a new sentence.



What Did You Notice?

What kinds of sensory details did Writer A use?

Which of the 5Ws + H questions do the new sentences answer?

SAMPLE ANSWER

SAMPLE ANSWER

Writer B did NOT include specific information to support the ideas presented. Help this writer by adding sensory details and new sentences to the response in the spaces provided below.

Cell phones are important in today's society because you can talk to different people. I talk to

Some phones ring with different tones when different people call. The tune of the ring can tell you who is calling. My favorite kind of ringtone sounds like

I really like talking on my cell phone because it's a great way to help me stay in touch with people. I especially like talking about



Call students' attention to Writer B's work on this page.

- Read through the directions at the top of the page with students.
- Tell students to use the call-out boxes to guide them through this activity.

SAMPLE ANSWER

my mom when she's at work, my dad when he travels, and my big sister in Canada

Who? Complete the new sentence.

SAMPLE ANSWER

waves crashing on a beach

Add sensory details.

SAMPLE ANSWER

important things like how my little nephew is doing, if he is crawling yet, and what his favorite food is

What? Complete the new sentence.

Teacher's Note

Encourage students to add more sentences after completing each of the sentences in this activity.



Independent Practice

Now turn to the Writer's Notebook section of your book and practice this strategy as you continue to work on your essay.

Independent Practice

(approx. 15 min.)

Prepare students for the Independent Practice.

- Let students know that they will continue to work in their Writer's Notebooks.
- Tell students to use Improving Paragraphs to strengthen the paragraphs they have drafted in previous lessons.
- Remind students that the goal of Improving Paragraphs is to add sensory details to their sentences and to add new sentences that answer the 5Ws + H.

Confer with students about their work.

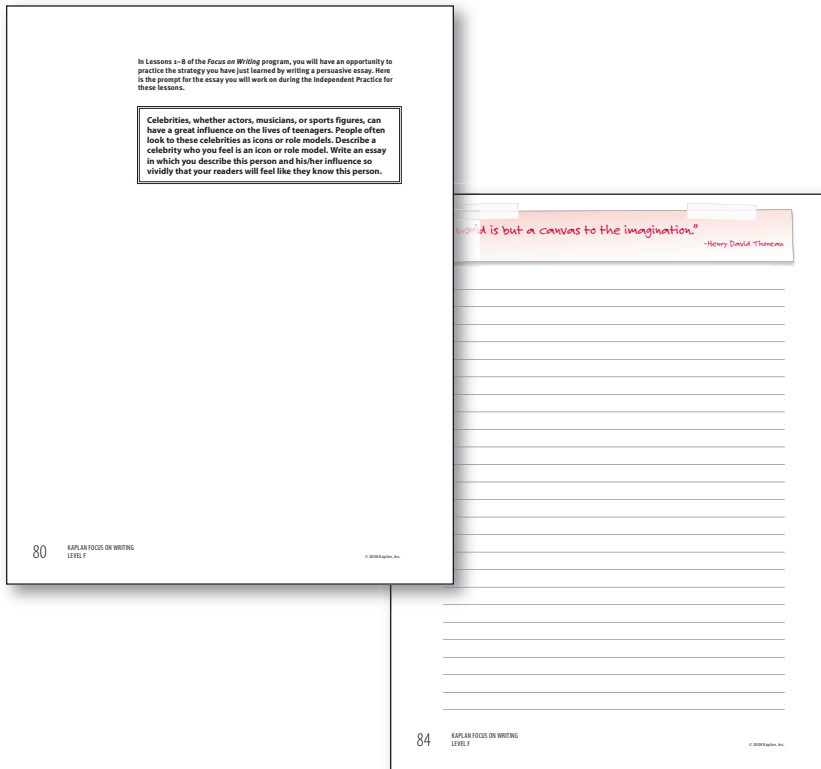
- As students work in their Writer's Notebooks, circulate and ask them to explain their thinking. Redirect students as needed by asking them questions about their work. Effective questions might include the following:
 - What sensory detail might you add here?
 - Can you answer any of the 5Ws + H questions here? Which one(s)? How?

Use the Conference Tracker at the end of this lesson to record your conversations with students.

- You may not have the opportunity to confer with every student during this class period; however, you may wish to use this chart to help you keep track of struggling students.
- As you speak with students about Improving Paragraphs, make a note of why students find this strategy difficult.



Some students may attempt to insert sentences that do not fit the context of the paragraph in an effort to answer the 5Ws + H. Encourage students to look for appropriate places where new sentences may be included. Let students know that in some paragraphs, it may not make sense to add new sentences.



In Lessons 1-8 of the Focus on Writing program, you will have an opportunity to practice the strategy you have just learned by writing a persuasive essay. Here is the prompt for the essay you will work on during the Independent Practice for these lessons.

Celebrities, whether actors, musicians, or sports figures, can have a great influence on the lives of teenagers. People often look to these celebrities as icons or role models. Describe a celebrity who you feel is an icon or role model. Write an essay in which you describe this person and his/her influence so vividly that your readers will feel like they know this person.

World is but a canvas to the imagination."
-Henry David Thoreau

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During the Independent Practice, students should continue working on their essays in the Writer's Notebook section of their books.



Reteaching Mini-Lessons

If students struggle with adding sensory details, consider using the following ideas to reteach this part of the strategy.

- Explain that every person, place, or thing has some qualities that relate to the five senses. Tell students to highlight or underline the person, place, or thing in every sentence of their paragraphs.
- Then ask students this question: “Can you add a word here that shows how this person, place, or thing feels, sounds, smells, looks, or tastes?”
- Encourage students to use the person, place, or thing in each sentence as a marker for where they can insert sensory details in their writing.

If students struggle with adding new sentences that answer the 5Ws + H, consider using the following ideas to reteach this part of the strategy.

- Acknowledge that it can be difficult to think of sentences to help expand the ideas in a paragraph.
- Have students create note cards or a small poster that lists the 5Ws + H questions in a checklist format.
- Tell students to pause after reading each sentence in their paragraphs and refer to their 5Ws + H checklists. Challenge students to add at least one new sentence to each paragraph using their checklists.

ELL

To help English Language Learners build their vocabularies and become more adept at incorporating sensory details into their writing, create a large class chart that is divided into five sections, one for each sense. As students encounter descriptive words, invite them to add each word to the appropriate section of the chart. Encourage students to use the sensory word chart as a resource for including sensory language in their writing.

As students read Writer A’s paragraph, encourage them to identify the questions that Writer A answers, and state the questions aloud to partners. For example, the second sentence in Writer A’s paragraph answers the question, “Why has the Internet made a huge difference in the lives of people everywhere?” This exercise will support students’ comprehension of the sample paragraph, as well as provide them with listening and speaking practice in English.



Reflection

(approx. 10 min.)

Prepare students for the Reflection.

- Instruct students to sit with their peer-editing partners.
- Have students exchange Writer’s Notebooks and read their partner’s work.
- Remind students that they should use the Reflection table to help them organize their feedback.



Extension

Cross-Curricular Activity

Divide students into groups of three. Give each group a card with the name of an animal on it. Instruct groups to develop a well-rounded paragraph about each animal. Circulate throughout the room to monitor and provide assistance as students work. At the end of the activity, have students share their paragraphs with the rest of the class.

Reteaching

Divide students into partner groups. Present a topic that is unrelated to the essay prompt, instructing each group to write a properly developed paragraph about this topic. The paragraphs should include a topic sentence and at least three details that “show” the topic rather than “tell” about it. Have each partner group share its paragraph with the rest of the class, and then discuss successes and difficulties that seemed to be common among groups and ways to improve paragraph development.

English Language Support

Write an example paragraph that “tells” rather than “shows.” Make sure to include several generic descriptive words that could be changed without much difficulty. Highlight these words in the paragraph, instructing students to replace them with sensory details that “show.”



Reflection

Use the table below to help you talk about your work in this lesson. Circle the box in each row that best describes your partner’s work.

1	2	3	4
My partner did not use any sensory details.	My partner used 1 or 2 sensory details.	My partner used 3 or 4 sensory details.	My partner used 5 or more sensory details.
My partner did not answer any of the 5Ws + H.	My partner answered 1 of the 5Ws + H.	My partner answered 2 or 3 of the 5Ws + H.	My partner answered 4 or more of the 5Ws + H.



Looking Beyond

In your journal, write about a special memory you have. Use sensory details and answer the 5Ws + H questions in your journal entry.

Independent Practice: Conference Tracker

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