

Grade 7 ▶

Unit Six

PRE-INSTRUCTION CHECKLIST

MECHANICS	ACQUAINTANCE & ANALYSIS
<input type="checkbox"/> review as necessary to enable revision skill use	<input type="checkbox"/> Communicative: Formal Letter
	WRITING ON DEMAND
	<input type="checkbox"/> ongoing, all disciplines

PATTERN STATEMENT

Structure aids clarity

NOTES

This unit engages students in combining persuasive writing with a formal, usually succinct, form of communication. The traditional business letter communicates, even without words, that the message is considered important by the sender and, therefore, should be seriously attended to by the recipient. The structure is more than a rigid format that must be followed. At a glance, the structure of a formal business letter conveys gravity and substance. It frames the writer's message in such a way that it prepares the receiver's mind for its tone and directness.

Seventh graders should no longer be using words analogous to *like*, *cool*, *fun*, and *got*. Vocabulary such as *resemble*, *admirable*, *entertaining*, and *are* are better suited to the rising writer. Consider having students explore the value of quality word choices by engaging them in exercises like the following:

1. Generate a list of weak words frequently found in adolescent writing. Flip through an elementary level chapter book for viable options. Include action, color, emotion-filled, and sensory words. Divide students into teams of two. Using a thesaurus, have each group record at least six stronger word choices for each original term.
2. Divide students into teams of two. Have them rewrite a nursery rhyme using stronger words found in a thesaurus. For example, "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall" might be

transformed into "H. D. Umpty positioned himself proudly upon an precariously high partition." Each group may read their rendition aloud for classmates to decode. The idea is not that the more sophisticated terms are better choices, but to make students aware that more specific and powerful words are available for their own writing.

Reliable sources differ in their recommended structuring of formal business letters. If you have instructional materials that differ from the structure presented in this unit, feel free to adapt according to your preference.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The pattern, *Structure aids clarity*, can be illustrated in an interesting way by distributing copies of a crossword puzzle grid with no clues attached and no numbers visible. Then the clues, mixed-up and with no numbers or "up," "down" indicators evident. Tell the students they have all they need to complete the puzzle and give them a few minutes to work at it (EX-ex). When they reach the point of frustration, have them discuss the following:

- Why couldn't you complete more of the puzzle?
- What is missing? or What would help? Why?
- In general terms (not a list of specifics), what is the puzzle missing?
- Because it is missing that (structure), what are you lacking?

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REVISION
SKILLS

Items and
Descriptors



GENRE

Formal Letter

Similar questions can guide students as they label and sort the experience (EX-co). Additional questioning can guide students to recognize the experience illustrates the pattern *Structure aids clarity* (EX-el). Students can then be

challenged to identify other areas of life where structure aids clarity (e.g., building design, such as a grocery store, story plots, board games) (EX-ap).

REVISION SKILLS

ITEMS and DESCRIPTORS			
Objective	Checklist		
<p>Student independently revises series of items or descriptors to best reflect their intended purpose and to communicate as strongly as possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use one item or descriptor for emphasis (e.g., Joe is determined.) • Use two items or descriptors for comparison (e.g., Joe is smart and determined.) • Use three items or descriptors for completeness (e.g., Joe is smart, determined, and conscientious.) • Only use four or more descriptors as a list (e.g., Before leaving for base camp, Joe packed several items: his phone, his weapon, his radio, and his uniform.) • Arrange items or descriptors from least syllables to most for easiest reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Read the draft to identify descriptors or nouns presented in a series. <input type="checkbox"/> Refer to the principles for how many items to include (e.g., one for power). <input type="checkbox"/> Revise to match intent and number of items. <input type="checkbox"/> Revise to state items from shortest to longest. 		
Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	PROFICIENT	ADEQUATE	NOT YET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features no examples of unnecessary or repetitive lists of items or descriptors, and/or of sequences of items or descriptors that are not optimally effective. ▶ No lists of items or descriptors seem forced. Each one has a purpose and strengthens the writing. ▶ Additional revision may strengthen some aspects of the writing, but the use of item and/or descriptor lists has been effectively addressed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features no examples of unnecessary or repetitive lists of items or descriptors, and/or of sequences of items or descriptors that are not optimally effective. ▶ No lists of items or descriptors seem forced. However, at least one item or descriptor within a list represents a weak word choice (e.g., nice, cool, writing utensil). Stronger or more specific words would increase the list's clarity or effect on the reader. ▶ Additional revision may strengthen the writing by replacing weak word choices with stronger words that clarify the intended meaning or increase the writing's effect on the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features no examples of unnecessary or repetitive lists of items or descriptors, and/or of sequences of items or descriptors that are not optimally effective. ▶ At least one list of items or descriptors seems forced, as if the writer added the list without considering its influence on the flow, strength, or clarity of the writing. ▶ Additional revision could strengthen the writing through better use or editing of item or descriptor lists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features several (two or more) examples of unnecessary or repetitive lists of items or descriptors, and/or of sequences of items or descriptors that are not optimally effective. ▶ Additional revision could significantly strengthen the writing through better use of item or descriptor lists, or by better structuring of such lists that are used.

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COMMUNICATIVE: Formal Letter	
Definition	Objective
<p>Letter written to an individual or organization, characterized by clarity, conciseness, formality, and a block format, and generally written to make an inquiry, a request, or a complaint. Common components and format include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Return address in upper right hand corner 2. Address of recipient on left side, beneath the return address 3. Date on right, aligned with return address, beneath recipient address 4. Salutation, should be formal: <i>Dear Dr. _____, Dear Ms. _____,</i> 5. <i>Dear Mr. _____, etc.</i> 6. Body: an introduction that explains who the writer is and the reason for writing; a middle section that provides details that support the requested action; a closing that requests action from the recipient 7. Valediction: line before signature: <i>Faithfully yours</i> or <i>Sincerely</i> 8. Signature and printed name 9. Enclosures: number and description—e.g., <i>Enclosures (2): resume and business card</i> 	<p>With teacher prompting, student writes a correctly structured and appropriately worded business letter to an organization (e.g., a letter praising a company's recent new product or suggesting a change in policy).</p>

PRACTICE TEXT

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SIXREVISION
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Descriptors

GENRE

Formal Letter

270 Cold Springs Road
Thompson, NE 69488

March 29, 2019

Mrs. Deborah Sharper
Almstadt Middle School
1976 Edulearn Lane
Thompson, NE 69488

Dear Mrs. Sharper:

I am a seventh grader at Almstadt Middle School and a member of the lacrosse, basketball, and debate teams. Each of these teams wears uniforms for competitions or games. Students at our school also wear uniforms to classes. All these uniforms reveal something I would like you to consider: our school colors are complicated, too complex, and mismatched. I believe a simpler, less confusing, more harmonious color scheme would benefit our school and its students.

The current combination of maroon, indigo, and green is difficult on people's eyes. Friends from other schools often ask me why we have three school colors and how we ended up with the current colors. Additionally, the current color scheme seems unrelated to our school mascot. When we are introduced as the Almstadt Alligators, other schools wonder why we are dressed in indigo and maroon uniforms. For our mascot, green makes sense, but the other colors do not. I know that Dr. Almstadt, the founder, originator, and starter of our school, chose the three colors because they were Mrs. Almstadt's favorites. However, since our school is more than one hundred years old, I believe it is time to choose colors that are more closely associated with our mascot and are not so shocking to people's eyes. I am requesting that you and the school board consider changing our school colors to yellow and green. An alligator's eyes are a yellowish color, and this simpler combination would make our school uniforms much more attractive. I have enclosed two paint chips with the suggested colors so you can see them side by side.

I would like to talk about, confer, and further discuss this idea with you. I will stop by the school office to make an appointment so we can consider the benefits of this suggested change and alteration. If you agree, perhaps we could present this idea at next month's school board meeting. That way the uniforms could be changed in time for the next school year. Thank you for giving this suggestion and recommendation serious thought.

Sincerely,

Simeon Whitmore

Enclosures (2): green paint chip, yellow paint chip

A POSSIBLE REVISION

This is not THE correct revision, but one possibility. Accept any justifiable revisions.

270 Cold Springs Road
Thompson, NE 69488

March 29, 2019

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Dear Mrs. Sharper:

I am a seventh grader at Almstadt Middle School and a member of the lacrosse, basketball, and debate teams. Each of those teams wears uniforms for competitions or games. Students at our school also wear uniforms to classes. All these uniforms reveal something I would like you to consider: our school colors are mismatched and complicated. I believe a simpler, more harmonious color scheme would benefit our school and its students.

The current combination of green, maroon, and indigo is difficult on people's eyes. Friends from other schools often ask me why we have three school colors and how we ended up with the current colors. Additionally, the current color scheme seems unrelated to our school mascot. When we are introduced as the Almstadt Alligators, other schools wonder why we are dressed in indigo and maroon uniforms. For our mascot, green makes sense, but the other colors do not. I know that Dr. Almstadt, the founder of our school, chose the three colors because they were Mrs. Almstadt's favorites. However, since our school is more than one hundred years old, I believe it is time to choose colors that are more closely associated with our mascot and are not so shocking to people's eyes. I am requesting that you and the school board consider changing our school colors to green and yellow. An alligator's eyes are a yellowish color, and this simpler combination would make our school uniforms much more attractive. I have enclosed two paint chips with the suggested colors so you can see them side by side.

I would like to further discuss this idea with you. I will stop by the school office to make an appointment so we can consider the benefits of this suggested change. If you agree, perhaps we could present this idea at next month's school board meeting. That way the uniforms could be changed in time for the next school year. Thank you for giving this suggestion serious thought.

Sincerely,

Simeon Whitmore

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