

# Jump In: A Workbook for Reluctant and Eager Writers



Sharon Watson

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To the mothers and students  
who participated in my  
Circuit-Riding Teacher Classes,  
to Terry,  
and to my three original students,  
upon whom I experimented freely.

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# Getting Your Feet Wet

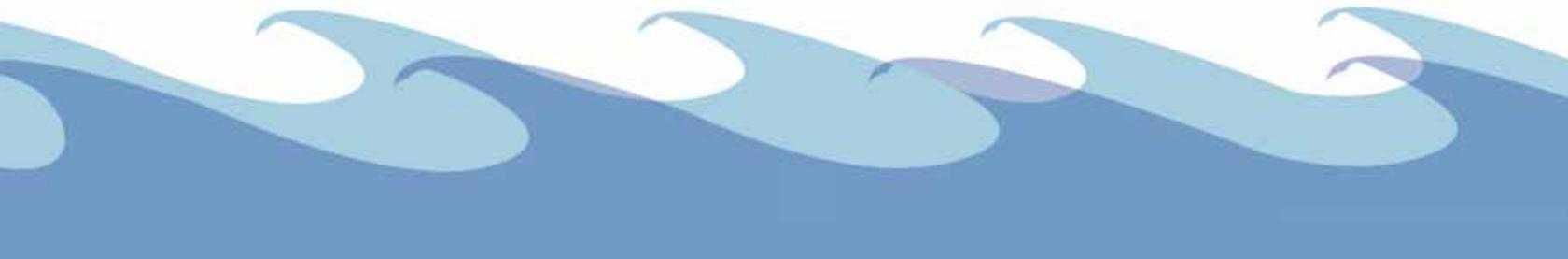
## Skill 1: Treading Water

Writing may send warm shivers of pleasure up your spine. Or it may make you feel as though you are drowning in an angry, choppy, icy sea with nothing in sight but hungry, toothy sharks and storm clouds spitting out stony hail as big as rotten eggs.

Either way, this workbook is going to make writing easier for you. Really.

**Now it's your turn.** Answer the questions below and on the next page. No one will grade your answers, so be honest.

1. What types of writing assignments are difficult for you?
2. What are the easiest writing assignments?
3. If you could write anything, what would you write?



4. What is a hard thing about writing? What is an easy thing?

Turn to page 238 and look in YOUR LOCKER. *Writing from Beginning to End* and *Mistake Medic*, along with other helpful tools, are back there. *Mistake Medic* is essential; you will need it for every assignment. Use this stuff—it's yours!

Now go to the next page and fill out the quick questionnaire you find there.

## It's all about ME!

### Writing is better...

(Check **all** the boxes below that finish the above sentence and are true for you. ↓)

- in the morning.
- at a desk.
- if I choose the topic.
- near a window.
- on my bed.
- when I write stories.
- with other people.
- at the computer.
- when I have my cat or dog in the room.
- outside.
- in a chair.
- when I have lots of time.
- late at night.
- at the kitchen table.
- with a pencil.
- if I get to write my opinion about something.
- when I research for reports.
- on the floor.
- when it's quiet.
- when I'm alone.
- with music.
- with a pen.
- in a beanbag chair.
- if someone tells me what to write.
- at the same time every day.
- I don't know.
- when I know I will not be graded on it.

► Have you learned anything about **yourself**? Pay attention to when you like to write and where you like to write. It will make writing sooo much easier!

## Skill 2: **Stop!** Don't write yet!

Suppose your teacher gives you an assignment to write a report on a recent natural disaster, and you get to choose which disaster. There are many from which to choose. Quickly list possible natural disasters you could write about. The first two are done for you.

- |          |    |
|----------|----|
| 1. flood | 5. |
| 2. fire  | 6. |
| 3.       | 7. |
| 4.       | 8. |

What you just did is called **brainstorming**; you wrote down ideas as they came to you. You didn't write them in any particular order. You just wrote words as they popped into your head.

Brainstorm ideas before you write any assignment. You will not use all the ideas you list, but you will use many of them. Brainstorming is a good way to get you thinking about the subject (topic). It will make writing your assignment so much easier.

Think about this: Suppose you decide to write your report on an earthquake. What are some of the things you will include in your report? What are some of the things you are going to have to find out about before you write? Where do you begin? You brainstorm.

There are lots of ways to brainstorm. You've already used the **number method** (above). Another way is to write your ideas anywhere on a piece of paper. Or you can make a list with **dashes** or **bullets**, like this:

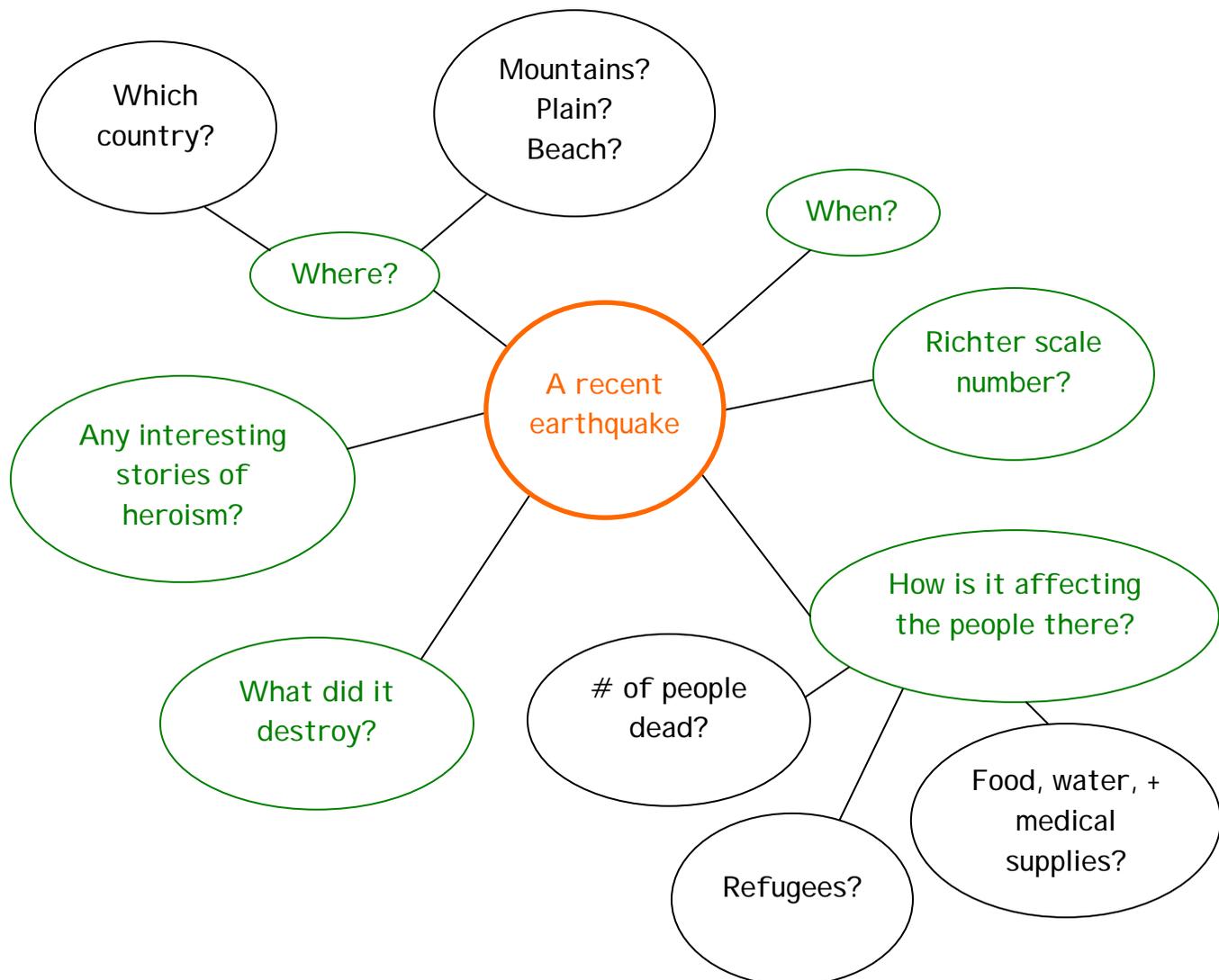
- In what country was the earthquake?
- Where was the epicenter?
- What was its number on the Richter scale?
- What happened to the people (how were they affected)?
- (You will keep writing ideas.)

OR

- In what country was the earthquake?
- Where was the epicenter?

- What was its number on the Richter scale?
- What happened to the people (how were they affected)?
- (You will keep writing ideas.)

Another interesting method you can use for brainstorming is called the **cluster method**. Your drawing will look much like a solar system; the topic goes in the middle (like the sun), and your ideas revolve around your topic (like the planets). Other smaller ideas may be attached to larger ideas (like satellites or moons around the planets). Below is one example of the *cluster method* of brainstorming. Read it and then turn the page.



**Now it's your turn.** Which method of brainstorming did you like the best? Check the box next to your favorite method for organizing your thoughts.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making a list anywhere on the paper | <input type="checkbox"/> Using bullets            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using numbers                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Using the cluster method |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using dashes                        |   |

**Now it's your turn again.** Decide which natural disaster you are going to brainstorm for a report (you won't really be writing the report—just writing down ideas for one). Choose a disaster other than an earthquake.

**The natural disaster:** \_\_\_\_\_

Now brainstorm ideas for what you might include in your report. Remember, they're just ideas; write lots of them now, even if they seem silly. Use your favorite method and the space below.

### Skill 3: Make it **Easy** on yourself

Writing uses two distinct and separate skills:

- Putting the words down on paper (creating)
- Fixing the words, grammar, punctuation, paragraphs, spelling, sentence structure and lengths, etc. (proofreading)

**It is too hard to do both at once**—they happen in two different parts of your brain. Even seasoned professional writers don't do both skills at the same time. They know that once they get their words down on paper, they can go back and fix them later. If they agonized over everything they wrote, wondering if they were doing it right, they would never get anything written.

And neither will you.

Here is good advice: Just write! Keep the pencil moving. Keep the thoughts flowing from your brain to the keyboard or pen. If you think that what you are writing is stupid or isn't making any sense or isn't grammatically correct, don't sweat it. Just write! You can go back later and fix it.

Don't agonize over a bad first sentence. Keep writing. You can fix it later.

Don't stop and look up a word you think you misspelled. Circle it and fix it later.

Don't reread your first sentences and weep and wail because they are horrible. Keep writing; you can fix them later. When you are creating your writing assignment, turn off your internal editor who tells you that your writing is awful.

When do you turn the editor back on? When you proofread, proofread, proofread (that means "proofread three times!") **after** you have written your assignment. Each paper needs three separate proofreading sessions.

**Now it's your turn.** Turn off your internal editor. **Choose** one of the topics below and **write** on the next page for ten minutes. No one will grade it. Start the timer when you begin to write—and keep writing!

1. Write about the best day you've ever had. OR
2. Write about a pet peeve or a character trait you can't stand.



Use one skill  
at a time.  
First write;  
then fix.

**TEN MINUTES:**



## Opinions—You've Got Them!

### Skill 1: What do you **Think**?

*Writing* your opinion is only slightly different than *saying* your opinion. And you say your opinions all the time! An opinion can come from something you can't stand or something you love. In other words, you feel strongly about it, one way or another.

You probably have an opinion on what kind of student you are, what book or movie your best friend would love, which Bible story or verse is your favorite, or what you want to eat for your next snack. All of those are opinions—and you have them!

**Now it's your turn.** Brainstorm by filling in the blanks that interest you. There are more on the next page.

**My Favorite**

**The Worst** (least favorite)

Color \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ice cream flavor \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sports team \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Song \_\_\_\_\_

Book \_\_\_\_\_

Car \_\_\_\_\_

Activity \_\_\_\_\_

School subject \_\_\_\_\_

Animal \_\_\_\_\_

Outfit \_\_\_\_\_

Store \_\_\_\_\_

Meal \_\_\_\_\_

Vacation \_\_\_\_\_

Game \_\_\_\_\_

Complete these sentences:

My favorite song is \_\_\_\_\_.

The worst sports team in the world is \_\_\_\_\_.

Congratulations! You have just written your opinion.

## Skill 2: What about the **Why?**

Any opinion, no matter how well it is written, must have **reasons**. You have to say why you believe in your opinion so people can agree with you and care about it.

Read the two conversations below. In them, Luke and Jessica are giving their reasons for their opinions. See if you can catch the reasons:

Juan: What about that game last night?

Luke: It stank! They kept missing the rebounds, they couldn't keep a decent zone defense, and Jones was benched in the first quarter with an injury. What a mess!

Kristen: So, how is it? How do I look in it?

Jessica: That is *so you!* You look great in that color, and it's the perfect size. Now hurry up! I want to try it on too.

**Now it's your turn.** Think about a time when you told someone your opinion. Try to remember what your reasons were. Write your opinion and your reasons in the space below. Then turn the page.

OPINION:

REASONS:

1.

2.

3.

Notice that in the examples on the previous page, each person gave three reasons for the opinion. Luke mentioned the bad rebounding, the lousy zone defense, and an injured player. Jessica said it was a good color, the right size, and desirable as a fashion. Find the reasons given in the next conversation (in the box below):



CARL: I'm going to play baseball with one of the teams in town this summer. What about you?

JON: Not me. I'm going to concentrate on soccer. In fact, I want to play on a professional team someday.

CARL: Professional? Oh, right—you broke the league record for goals in a season, didn't you?

JON: Yeah. You know, when I'm running down the field, it's almost like I'm flying. When I wake up in the morning, I can't wait to put on my cleats and hit the field. I practice at home at least four hours a day. It's like I was born to play soccer.

CARL: So, what do your parents think about all of this?

JON: Oh, they're for it. Coach Hamm came to our house last week and talked to them. We figured out a practice schedule. They're all pulling for me.

**Now it's your turn again.** Jon clearly believes he will make a professional soccer team someday. That is his opinion of his abilities. What are the three reasons that came up in this conversation?

1.

2.

3.

### Skill 3: A good Order

In any well-written opinion, you should have at least three good reasons to support your opinion. But wait—there's more! You should also *arrange your reasons in an interesting order*. There are many ways to do this that will hold the reader's interest. You will learn two in this skill. Read the examples below:

Jon thinks he can get on a professional team. Why?

1. **Most important:** He proved his talent by breaking a league record.
2. **Next important:** His coach and parents see his talent and are supporting him.
3. **Least important:** He loves to play the sport.

Jon thinks he can get on a professional team. Why?

1. **Next important:** His coach and parents see his talent and are supporting him.
2. **Least important:** He loves to play the sport.
3. **But most important:** He proved his talent by breaking a league record.

Do you agree that the most important reason is that he broke the league record? Do you agree that the least important reason is that he loves to play soccer? Or is the fact that he loves to play the biggest reason? If you think one reason is more important than another, it is your job to make it more important by what you say about it!

Whatever you do, don't begin with your least important reason. You will lose your reader right away!

**Now it's your turn.** You listed many opinions in Skill 1, pages 13 and 14. Choose one of those now or choose a new one and write it on the next page. Then brainstorm five reasons why you like or don't like that particular thing. Don't pay attention to the most important or least important right now. Just write down your reasons as they come to you. Remember: write now, fix later.

Opinion:

Reasons:

\_\_\_1.

\_\_\_2.

\_\_\_3.

\_\_\_4.

\_\_\_5.

Look back over your list and cross off the two weakest reasons or the reasons you think you might not be able to write much about.

In the blanks next to the remaining three reasons, write **MI** for your most important reason, **NI** for your next important reason, and **LI** for your least important reason.

Select the order in which you want to use your reasons by underlining one of these sets:

most important, next important, least important order

**OR**

next important, least important, most important order

In the blanks below, rearrange your three reasons from above in the new order you just selected.

1.

2.

3.

Now you have a good skeleton to use for the body of your opinion paper. In Skill 4, you will put some flesh on those bones.

## Skill 4: The **Body**

Each reason lives in its own paragraph. Because you're using three reasons, the middle part (the body) of your opinion paper will have three paragraphs. Each reason also has to have a few supporting statements to make it strong, like pilings under a bridge. The supporting statements are usually facts or examples. Read the following paper, "My New Pet," to see how this works. Note the order the reasons are in.



### Introduction

(see Skill 5, p. 21,22)

### Reason # one

(most important)

### Reason # two

(next important)

### Reason # three

(least important)

### Conclusion

(see Skill 6, p. 23-25)

#### My New Pet

When my mom said I could have a pet, I went to the pet store to look at all the animals. Which one did I choose? I saw the cute gerbils and hamsters scurrying in their cages. I listened to the canaries, parakeets, and finches singing. I watched the three fuzzy puppies playing with a ball. But when I came to the kitten cage, I knew what I wanted.

Cats are clean. They are constantly licking themselves to remove burrs, dirt, and unpleasant smells. Cats can be trained to use a kitty litter box, making it easy to clean up after them.

Cats are smart. They cover up their messes. And if you happen to miss a day feeding your cats, it is only a small problem to them. They know how to find mice, moles, small rabbits, and even moths for their meals.

Cats are polite. They quietly walk through the house, minding their own business. They are not fussy, and they have manners.

I chose a white and butterscotch kitten, and I named her Sundae. Mom bought a scratching post so Sundae would have a safe place to sharpen her claws. I bought a little ball with a bell inside it so Sundae could have something to play with. She's the cutest thing! She's a fluffy ball of fur. I loved having a kitten so much that I went back the next day and bought Chocolate, her sister. Now I have two pets, and I love them both!

Notice that all the reasons turned into **topic sentences** (what the rest of the paragraph is about).

**Now it's your turn.** All of the reasons for buying a cat have at least two supporting statements. List the two things the writer used to prove that cats are clean.

1.

2.

On page 18 (Skill 3), you chose three reasons for your own opinion. **CHOOSE ONE** of those reasons now and fill out a paragraph with supporting statements.

Reason (which becomes your topic sentence):

Supporting statements for reason (the rest of the paragraph):

## Skill 5: Hello!



Even a skeleton needs a head. The **introductory paragraph** will become your skeleton's head.

The first sentence in your *introductory paragraph* (or introduction) should grab the reader's attention. If soccer-playing Jon wrote a report on why he thought he could get on a professional team, he wouldn't begin it like this: "This is a report on why I will someday play soccer on a professional team." If he did, you would start snoozing.

Your job is to grab the reader's interest by beginning with a bang. You do this by using an interesting statement, fact, quotation, question, or story.

- **An interesting statement:** All my life I've only had one goal—to play soccer on a professional team.
- **An interesting fact:** A professional soccer team has only eleven players on the field. Someday, I'm going to be one of them.
- **A quotation:** "Feet, knees, chest, head—no matter how Jon handles the ball, he does it right," Coach Hamm told my parents last night.
- **A question:** What does it take to earn a spot on a professional soccer team?
- **A story:** When I was five years old, my dad took me to a sporting-goods store. As we walked up and down the aisles, I saw baseballs, basketballs, and footballs in their fancy boxes. I noticed yellow tennis balls in their tubes. Then I saw a round ball with interesting black and white geometric shapes all over it. When I asked my dad what it was, he took it out of the box and handed it to me. From the moment the leather hit my skin, I was hooked.

Remember to include your **opinion** in your introduction. Don't keep it a surprise.

Here's an example of an opinion in an introductory paragraph, which uses an interesting quotation:

According to an ad by the oil company Chevron, "It took us 125 years to use the first trillion barrels of oil. We'll use the next trillion in 30." Clearly, it's time to conserve some natural resources.

The writer's opinion is the last sentence: "Clearly, it's time to conserve some natural resources." The student will most likely continue on with different natural

resources and how to conserve them, finishing with how the reader can conserve too.

Here's another example of an introductory paragraph. It is from an opinion paper written by a boy in the eighth grade:

Wind blowing through your hair at 231 mph is an everyday experience for some people. No, I'm not talking about the latest hairdryer or the world's fastest roller-coaster ride or even a Ferrari. I'm talking about the world's fastest production car, the McLaren F1.

Notice that he began with an interesting statement. Also notice that he did not write, "I like the McLaren F1." He didn't have to. You know his opinion of the car by how exciting he made it sound in his *interesting statement*.

Make sure these three ingredients are swimming around in your introduction: an interesting beginning, the topic, and your opinion of the topic. If the reader doesn't know the topic and your opinion of it by the end of the first paragraph, check your "recipe" to see what you left out.

**Now it's your turn.** Write an introduction for your opinion in the space below. Begin it by using any of the five tools listed on page 21. Make sure the reader knows whether you are for or against the topic.

## Skill 6: Goodbye!

If the skeleton's head is your introduction, then the skeleton's feet are the conclusion.

Avoid just restating all your reasons for your opinion in your *concluding paragraph* (conclusion). That's a snoozer too. Tell the reader something of interest about the subject without introducing another point. Again, use an interesting statement, fact, quotation, question, or story you've saved for the end. Here are some examples Jon could use for his conclusion:

- **An interesting statement:** It takes a lot of hard work to get on a professional team. It takes a powerful dream too. And it takes an encouraging support team. I know I'll make it because I've got all three.
- **An interesting fact:** Before you tell me that my professional dreams are ridiculous, remember the famous skier that put our town on the map in the last Olympics. If she can make it from this small town, so can I. And I intend to!
- **A quotation:** At our annual awards dinner, the president of the Mountain City Soccer League said, "I think we have another Pelé on our hands." He was referring to me. I'm not there yet, but I intend to be.
- **A question:** Our town's famous skier received the key to the city at the end of her homecoming parade. When I turn professional and help win the World Cup for the U.S. soccer team, will Mountain City do the same for me?
- **A story:** I dream about the team, the practices, and the hard work it will take to get on a professional team. As a five-year-old boy, I had no idea that my first soccer ball would take me so far. But that little kid dreamed big. And I still do.

Get the picture? Below, read how the eighth-grade boy concluded his opinion paper on the McLaren F1. He used interesting statements:

Obviously the McLaren F1 wins the race against the Ferrari 550 Maranello because of its size, weight, and performance. No wonder the McLaren F1 is the world's fastest production car! Next time you want to take a joy ride, choose a McLaren F1—and skip the roller coaster!

Any time you can tie your conclusion to your introduction, you give your reader a satisfying experience. Notice that when the writer mentioned the roller coaster in his conclusion, he was tying that paragraph to his introduction.

Tying your conclusion to your introduction is called the full-circle technique.

**Now it's your turn.** Write a satisfying conclusion to your opinion in the space below. Use any of the five tools listed on page 23. When you finish, read the next page.

⇒ Here's something interesting: You didn't begin at the top of a blank piece of paper and write to the bottom of it. Look at the process you've already gone through:

- **Brainstorm.** You listed some of your opinions and chose one to work with.
- **Prewrite.** You listed five reasons for the opinion you chose. Then you crossed off two that were weak or that wouldn't work.
- **Order.** You chose a logical order in which to present your reasons.
- **Write the body.** You wrote supporting statements for one of your three reasons. If you were writing this opinion, you would finish the other two paragraphs.
- **Write the introduction.** You thought of an interesting statement, fact, quotation, question, or story with which to begin your introduction. You made sure the reader knew your topic, and you included your opinion.
- **Write the conclusion.** You thought of an interesting statement, fact, quotation, question, or story to include in your conclusion. You filled in more to finish out the paragraph if you needed to. You tried to tie your conclusion to your introduction in some way.

Although you began your writing with the body, you may begin at the introduction or even the conclusion if you wish. Some professional writers begin with the conclusion because they know how they want their report to end. For most writers of your age, however, it is best to begin with the body or the introduction.

What's left? If you were going to finish this opinion, you would put the introduction, body, and conclusion in the right order. Then you would proofread, proofread, proofread (that means "Proofread Three Times!") using the Mistake Medic on page 238. And last, you would hand a polished paper to your teacher and relax.

Skill 7 has a copy of a real opinion paper on it. It's about...well, you can read it and find out.

## Skill 7: An interesting Friend

A girl in the fifth grade wrote this opinion. It contains 243 words and a very interesting friend. Read it and answer the questions at the end.

### My Friend

Every Friday, I carry my peg-legged friend up the stairs to the door of Mrs. Westfield's small home covered in vines. Don't worry. My friend isn't a pirate. She's a cello.

I found my beloved friend four years ago on an old, white shelf at Mrs. Westfield's home. She dusted her off and told me to take good care of her, for she would be my friend for the rest of my life. I have loved playing the cello from the very beginning.

The cello is known for its deep, rich sound. It is fun to shift up and down the fingerboard. In orchestra, the cello often plays the harmony part. I also like learning about different composers such as Bach and Mozart and reading about famous musicians such as Yo-Yo Ma and Pablo Casals.

Mrs. Westfield makes it so enjoyable; without her I think I would have lost hope by now. She makes learning so much fun by using different, easy techniques. Mrs. Westfield has always been understanding. She doesn't get angry if I make a mistake but encourages me to try again.

The most exciting part of playing the cello is performing. I have enjoyed playing in duets, trios, quartets, music camps, nursing homes, church, and recitals.

I encourage you to play the cello, too, or at least try. Who knows? You may make a life-long friend. I know I'll never part with my peg-legged friend.

**Now it's your turn.** Answer the following questions:

1. Does she have an interesting first sentence?
2. How does she tie her conclusion to her introduction?
3. In paragraphs four and five, what are her reasons for liking the cello?

Paragraph 4:

Paragraph 5:

4. After reading this, do you think you would like to play the cello?

## Skill 8: The Assignment

### CHOOSE ONE:

- Complete and polish the opinion you have been working on. Word count: at least 150 words.
- Do you love to write? Don't like to write? Couldn't care one way or the other about writing? Write your opinion of writing. Use at least 150 words.
- The writer of "My New Pet" really likes cats. Do you disagree with the writer? Is there another animal you like better? Write your opinion of that animal. Or write why you detest cats! Use at least 150 words.
- Look at the favorite/worst lists you filled out on pages 13 and 14 (in Skill 1). Choose one of those topics and write your opinion about it in at least 150 words.
- Your choice. Choose something that you love or can't stand (something you feel strongly about) and write your opinion of it. Use at least 150 words.

### A suggested writing schedule:

- Day 1           ▶ **Brainstorm.** Decide on your opinion, your three reasons, and an order in which to put them.
- Days 2–3       ▶ **Write the body** (the three paragraphs that include your three reasons).
- Day 4           ▶ **Write the introduction and conclusion.**
- Day 5           ▶ **Put the paragraphs in the right order.** Proofread three separate times for mistakes. Make a neat copy.

# THE LIFEGUARD'S LOCKER

A parent/teacher manual for  
*Jump In:*  
*A Workbook for*  
*Reluctant and Eager Writers*

Sharon Watson



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## Dear Parent and Teacher,

I wish I could sit down and talk with you about the rich subject of writing. Since that is not possible, I will have to settle for making a list. May God, whose words are life, bless your work.

1. This workbook is for middle school students. High school students who have had little practice in writing or who are reluctant writers will also find it helpful.
2. You will need to use a student-friendly grammar book in addition to this workbook (see Grammar Resources, pages 55-56).
3. There is enough teaching material in here for at least **two years**. The **10-Minute Writing Plunges** will take one year; the student section will take at least another. Avoid running both programs concurrently. Teachers successfully have used the **Plunges** as breaks between the chapters, though, like a calming stretch between races.
4. The student workbook section has more than 240 days of material and work, including the longer assignments. Choose what you want your students to learn. You are the best judge.
5. Chapter headings labeled "The Basics" are **prerequisites** for the rest of the persuasion and exposition chapters.
6. Each day's work is labeled a *Skill*. Each skill has a **Now it's your turn** section that will take 5 to 20 minutes to complete.
7. At the end of some chapters or skills, students will pause to work on a longer assignment that may take anywhere from two to ten days to complete.
8. Each of these longer assignments has a suggested writing schedule, making it easy for you and your students to plan.
9. When students are through with the longer assignment, they may return to the *Skill* days.
10. Because a reluctant writer is more likely to write his opinion than a report, the student workbook begins with opinions and persuasion rather than exposition.
11. This workbook teaches a *Chicago*-style bibliography to simplify the process but MLA parenthetical notations and in-text citations for clarity. For writers of this age, it is important to focus on skills and practice, not on a certain association's style.
12. In order to avoid the pesky and cumbersome pronouns *he/she* and *he or she*, I use the generic *he* most often (apologies to female students).

## Jump In Objectives

### I. The Course

1. To develop an age-appropriate competence in all four areas of writing: persuasion, exposition, description, and narration.
2. To make writing accessible by using incremental steps in the teaching process.
3. To provide exposure to and practice in persuasion, exposition, description, narration, and poetry.
4. To provide grade-appropriate examples of good writing in order to encourage, inspire, and instruct the student.
5. To foster successful writing by breaking down the process into smaller pieces before giving the student the larger assignment.
6. To reinforce lessons by a student’s response in the Now It’s Your Turn sections.
7. To balance a difficult assignment by keeping the word count low.
8. To foster creativity and imagination needed for descriptive and narrative writing.
9. To engage the student by employing a conversational tone in the text.

### II. Attitudes

1. To foster a love for writing by a series of small successes.
2. To dismantle a fear of writing in reluctant writers.
3. To encourage an interest in writing by beginning with opinions and persuasion.
4. To delight fearful writers by allowing them to write on a guided topic for 10 minutes without being assessed or graded (the 10-Minute Writing Plunges).
5. To encourage eager writers by providing interesting assignments.

### III. Skills

1. To gain competence in writing persuasively by learning and practicing the Do List and by learning and avoiding the Don’t List.
2. To develop organizational skills needed for taking notes, organizing notes, and writing essays or reports.
3. To practice organizational skills such as brainstorming and using the cluster method.
4. To learn to communicate clearly by following step-by-step instructions and by organizing before writing.
5. To develop thinking skills by completing assignments such as cause and effect, and compare and contrast.
6. To practice beginning in the body of a composition in order to disarm the fear of writing.
7. To strengthen proofreading skills by using the Mistake Medic, a self-guided proofreading tool.
8. To further writing skills in accomplished writers by assigning challenging and interesting work.
9. To strengthen skills needed for real-life writing by completing such assignments as a letter to a librarian, a newspaper article, and a how-to paper.
10. To develop a greater skill in the hidden intricacies of descriptive writing.
11. To practice skills in capturing the reader’s attention, whether in fiction or nonfiction.
12. To practice writers’ devices such as dovetailing, compare and contrast, hooks, and patterns of three.
13. To evaluate other writers’ work, thereby learning how to critique one’s own.