

# Writing Strategies

## Teacher's Guide

**Grade Level:** 3–5

**Curriculum Focus:** Language Arts

**Lesson Duration:** 1–2 class periods

### Program Description

*Prewriting* (4:31) – Drawing pictures can help a writer organize thoughts before writing.

*Think Big* (4:28) – A good writer utilizes the basic rules of good writing, using complete sentences and including descriptive words in a story.

*Descriptive Words* (3:43) – Descriptive words make a story clearer and more interesting for a reader.

*Asking & Telling Sentences* (3:30) – Writers employ different kinds of sentences to convey information in a story.

*Spelling* (4:34) – Spelling is an important part of good writing.

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### Onscreen Questions

- Pretend you get to spend a day at the fire station. Draw a picture of your day. Then write a story to go with the picture.
  - What else do you know about elephants? Think of three words to describe them and use the words in a complete sentence.
  - What words could you use to describe yourself? Draw a self-portrait. Then write a sentence to describe yourself. Be sure to include descriptive words.
  - What was your favorite thing you learned about Africa? Write a telling sentence about Africa and an asking sentence about something you want to learn about Africa.
  - What foods do you like? Write two sentences about your favorite food.
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### Lesson Plan

#### *Student Objectives*

- Learn how descriptive words make stories clearer and more interesting.
- Write stories using descriptive words

#### *Materials*

- *Writing Strategies* video

- Writing paper
- Pencils and erasers

### *Procedures*

1. Have your students close their eyes and listen as you describe a familiar object in the classroom. Ask students to raise their hands if they think they know what the object is. Ask students to list the descriptive words that helped them identify the object. Would they have known the object if you had not used those words?
2. Discuss the importance of using descriptive words in written stories. Have students watch *Writing Strategies*. Then ask them to share other descriptive words they would use to identify elephants or the dog breeds shown in the program. Share some examples of how descriptive words make stories clearer and more interesting.
3. List the names of common household or classroom items on the board or on a piece of chart paper where students can see it. As a class, brainstorm words that describe the items. Write these descriptive words on the board or chart paper and talk about them. Which words are more descriptive than others? Which words are less descriptive? Which words can be used to describe more than one item in the list? Which words help clearly identify an item?
4. Ask students to think of other common items and keep their ideas to themselves. Tell them that they will write a descriptive paragraph about one item without writing the name of it. Each paragraph should be at least five sentences and describe such details as the item's appearance, how heavy it is, what it is used for, its color, and where it is found; students should not reveal the name of the item in their paragraphs. Explain that students will read other students' finished paragraphs to see if they can figure out the items based on the descriptive words.
5. Give students time in class to write their paragraphs. Remind them to use as many descriptive words as they can, without naming the item. Discuss the importance of using clear, complete sentences and following the basic rules of writing.
6. When students have finished writing their paragraphs, have them switch them with a partner. Have the partners read the paragraphs and try to identify the items described. What descriptive words did students use? What words or phrases clearly described the items?
7. Ask volunteers who had trouble identifying an item to share the paragraph with the rest of the class. Talk about ways these paragraphs could be improved. What descriptive words or phrases could be used to more clearly identify the item?
8. Once the paragraphs have been read and discussed, have the class summarize what they have learned about descriptive words. Ask students to talk about the important role descriptive words play in making stories and other writing clearer and more interesting to readers.

### *Assessment*

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students were highly engaged in class discussions and partner readings; demonstrated a clear understanding of the importance of using descriptive words in writing; and wrote creative, unique, and descriptive paragraphs that contained no grammatical or spelling errors, and clearly identified a particular item without revealing its name.
- **2 points:** Students participated in class discussions and partner readings; demonstrated a general understanding of the importance of using descriptive words in writing; and wrote somewhat creative, unique, and descriptive paragraphs that contained few grammatical or spelling errors, and generally identified a particular item without revealing its name.
- **1 point:** Students participated minimally in class discussions and partner readings; were unable to demonstrate a basic understanding of the importance of using descriptive words in writing; and wrote incomplete or inaccurate paragraphs that contained multiple grammatical or spelling errors and did not clearly identify a particular item or revealed the name of the item.

## Vocabulary

### **descriptive**

*Definition:* Serving to convey an idea, image, or impression

*Context:* Descriptive words can make your writing clearer and more interesting.

### **sentence**

*Definition:* A string of words satisfying the grammatical rule of a language; a grammatical unit that is syntactically independent

*Context:* Writers use different kinds of sentences when they write.

### **story**

*Definition:* An account of events or series of events, either true or fictitious

*Context:* You have written a great story about your favorite foods.

### **writing**

*Definition:* A written work, especially a literary composition

*Context:* Good writers think a lot about their writing before they start to work.

## Academic Standards

### **Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>



This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Language Arts – Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process; Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing
- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

### **The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)**

The National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association have developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching the English language arts. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>

This lesson plan addresses the following English standards:

- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
  - Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.
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## **Support Materials**

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>
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## **DVD Content**

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

### ***How To Use the DVD***

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

***Play Video*** – This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

***Video Index*** – Here the video is divided into sections indicated by video thumbnail icons; brief descriptions are noted for each one. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a



computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

**Curriculum Units** – These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher's Guide. Total running times for these segments are noted. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

**Standards Link** – Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

**Teacher Resources** – This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

## Video Index

### I. Prewriting (5 min.)

Before sitting down to write, it is helpful to think about what you want to say. See why drawing pictures is a good way to plan your writing.

### II. Think Big (4 min.)

Good writers remember to write in complete sentences and use descriptive words in their stories. Examine the basic rules for improving your writing.

### III. Descriptive Words (4 min.)

When it comes to making your writing clearer and more exciting for readers, descriptive words are key. Learn how and when to use them.

### IV. Asking & Telling (4 min.)

Decipher the differences between asking and telling sentences. Then find out how to use both to convey a variety of information.

### V. Spelling (5 min.)

Spelling errors make it harder for readers to understand what you are saying. Take a look at the steps you can use to make sure you spell words correctly.



## Curriculum Units

### 1. Finding the Story

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What kinds of things do you like to write about?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: What details about the firehouse visit should Mary and Jack include in their story?

A: Answers will vary.

### 2. Prewriting Pictures

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: How can you organize your thoughts before sitting down to write?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: How do prewriting pictures help with the writing process?

A: They can help you organize your thoughts before writing about an event or activity. Then, during the writing process, prewriting pictures can serve as memory prompts that remind you of what you want to say or what details you want to include.

### 3. Informative, Complete Sentences

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What rules do you follow in your everyday life?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: What are some basic rules of good writing?

A: Possible answers include "always write in complete sentences" and "remember to describe what you are writing about."

### 4. Using Descriptive Words

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What words can you use to describe an object's size and shape?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: Why is it important to include descriptive words in a story?

A: Descriptive words make the ideas in your writing clearer. They also make your writing more interesting for readers.

### 5. Sentence Types

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: Name some different kinds of sentences.



A: Possible answers include statement or declarative sentences, question or interrogative sentences, exclamatory sentences, and command or imperative sentences.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: How is an asking sentence different from a telling sentence?

A: An asking sentence is a question; it asks the reader something. A telling sentence is a statement; it tells the reader something. Both sentence types begin with a capital letter. Asking sentences end with a question mark, and telling sentences end with a period.

## 6. Good Spelling

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What are some words you have trouble spelling?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: How can you make sure you are spelling a word correctly?

A: First, try to sound out the word and write down the sounds. Then, look it up in a picture dictionary using the first letter and any others you know to begin your search.