

# WRITING: THE PEN IS MIGHTY



**COMPETENCY**

**CATEGORY:** Basic Skills

**CATEGORY**

**NUMBER:** D.23

**COMPETENCY:** Communicate in writing.

**OBJECTIVE:** Upon completion of this module, students will be able to communicate in writing.

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## INDEX

RESOURCE	SPECIALIST	STUDENT (# PER)	PAGE
Learning Activity D.23-1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspaper with comic strips</li> <li>• White-out</li> <li>• Prepared comic strips for each student</li> </ul>			14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Sheet—“See You in the Funny Papers”</li> </ul>			16
Learning Activity D.23-2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper and pencil</li> <li>• Pre-selected community locations written on a slip of paper (enough for each student to receive one)</li> </ul>			17
Learning Activity D.23-3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pencil and paper</li> <li>• List of approved products or services</li> </ul>			18
Learning Activity D.23-4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A variety of newspapers and magazines</li> <li>• Pencil and paper</li> </ul>			19
Learning Activity D.23-5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pencil and paper</li> </ul>			20
Learning Activity D.23-6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Index cards</li> <li>• Pencil and paper</li> </ul>			21
Pre-Assessment/Post-Assessment			22
Answer Key—Pre-Assessment/Post-Assessment			26
Answer Key— Learning Activities D 23.1-6			28

## INTRODUCTION

- Prepare a transparency with the quote “The Pen is Mightier than the Sword.”
- Show the transparency and ask the students if they can give examples of celebrities (actors, musicians, politicians) that have been hurt by something that was written about them in the press.
- Ask if there are any examples in which the power of the written word was used as a plus (compliment).

**Note to Specialist: If possible, integrate a discussion of current events and the role the media has played.**

- Tell the students that this module will develop their skills to write effectively and persuasively.

## Administer Pre-Assessment

## OUTLINE

- A. Prepare before you write.
1. Think about what you are going to say.
  2. Identify who you are writing to.
  3. Think through the message.
    - a. What is/are the main point(s)?
    - b. What are the supporting evidences and/or points?
    - c. How should the message open and close?

Example:

If a citizen were writing a letter to gain support for a new traffic signal to be installed at an intersection, the writer would first organize his/her thoughts by identifying the main points. In this case, the main points would be:

- Increase of traffic at that intersection
- View of the road is impaired
- Examples of accidents and near-accidents

The writer would then collect specific pieces of information that supported the main points. For example, the writer might have a vehicle count per hour showing a dramatic increase in traffic at the intersection to support point “a” above.

Then the writer would want to consider how to open and close the letter. Perhaps the writer would choose to open with an account of a recent accident at that location since that kind of opening would be dramatic and attention getting. They would want to state their purpose for the letter by asking for the traffic light during the first paragraph.

Upon closing, the writer would summarize his or her main points and again ask the reader to move to action on their request for a new traffic light.

B. Organize your material.

1. As you think of points to support or develop a main idea, ask:
  - a. Does it relate directly to the main idea (avoid being vague)?

**Note to Specialist: Emphasize that supporting information needs to be specific as opposed to “it’s bad,” or “it’s stupid,” or “I just think things would be better if...”**

- b. Can you expand on the point with facts or examples?

- c. Is there enough to say about it to include it as a point?
- d. List all possibilities.

Example:

If you were writing concerning the traffic light mentioned above, you would want to first list *all* of the accidents and near accidents you could gather. You would even write down some things that *might* happen. You may not use everything you gather, but you should not throw out any possibilities when you are first gathering and organizing your material.

2. A chart like the following might help you organize:

Main Point: Our town needs to build a new city hall.		
Points:	Expand on Points	Is there enough?
1. The current building is dangerous.	1. Places in the floor that have broken through.  2. Last week a light fixture fell from the ceiling almost hitting a man.  3. There was a report of a fire in the basement this year.	Yes. I could give examples and provide details of the stories.

**COMPLETE LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-1**  
**“SEE YOU IN THE FUNNY PAPERS”**

C. Pre-write to create a rough draft.

1. Outline a logical order of the points you have gathered. Some suggestions are:

- a. Chronological
- b. Most important to least important
- c. Least important to most important
- d. Front to back
- e. Associated ideas

1. Example: If the main idea was that students should not have a dress code, associated ideas might be grouped into categories like:

Freedom of expression  
Financial issues  
Self esteem

**COMPLETE LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-2**  
**“GETTING THERE IS HALF THE FUN ”**

- f. Others...?
- g. Then the categories would follow a logical order (see “a” through “d” above).

**Note to Specialist: This might be a good place to have students brainstorm different situations in which they might have to come up with some kind of logical order and what kind of order might work best.**

2. Write the rough draft.
  - a. Use the supporting ideas and details you have decided to use in the writing.
  - b. Write in proper form.
    1. Opening or topic paragraph - may include the following:
      - a. State the main idea of the topic.
      - b. Give an overview of the writing.
      - c. States the purpose of the writing.

Examples:

To recommend a person or product.

To ask for help.

To request a product or catalog.

To present an argument.

2. Develop paragraphs with opening sentence, details and closing sentence.

Example:

I believe organizing your study skills will result in higher grades (opening sentence). You will not forget assignments (detail) or forget to turn them in on time (detail). In addition, you will find the best time and place to complete your assignments (detail). Not only will you avoid zeros for missed assignments, but work turned in will be better quality (closing sentence).



3. Closing or summary paragraph may include:
  - a. Conclusion.
  - b. Summary.
  - c. Main idea.
  - d. Bringing the details together.

Example:

When you consider that all of your assignments will be completed and turned in on time, that alone will increase your grade significantly. Moreover, your understanding of the subject matter will increase as will your confidence from regular study time. Organizing your study time will pay off in a big way, just like it has for many others.

**Note to Specialist: Use the following example to point out the major parts of a letter that are designed to persuade. You might even let the students complete the letter by “filling in the blanks.”**

Example:

September 14, 19\_\_

Dear Mr. Mayor:

Our city council will soon decide whether or not to build a new courthouse. This is long overdue. Our city desperately needs a new facility. Not only is our present courthouse old and unattractive, it is a safety hazard for those who work there. In addition, a larger courthouse is needed to accommodate the growth of our town. I hope you will encourage the council to approve this proposal.

First of all, our courthouse is an eyesore. It was built sixty years ago and it has not been kept up. The walls are stained by time and have a dingy

appearance. There is a musty smell throughout the entire building. In addition, the lighting is so poor in most of the rooms, it is difficult to do paperwork. Overall, the courthouse is dark and gloomy; it is depressing to be inside of it.

Perhaps the most important argument in favor of a new courthouse is safety.

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Sincerely,

Kyler Terrill

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>COMPLETE LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-3</b> <b>“AND NOW, A MESSAGE FROM OUR SPONSOR”</b></p>
--

D. Edit what you have written.

1. Look for spelling, punctuation, grammar and sentence structure.
2. Use proper sentence construction.
  - a. Use complete sentences. A complete sentence has a subject and a verb.

Examples:

Charvez (subject), slightly south of the border is (verb) host to this year’s chili cook-off.

I (subject) care (verb).

- b. Correct fragments and run-on sentences.

1. A fragment is a group of words that does not contain a subject and verb.
2. A run-on sentence is two sentences written together as if one sentence without using proper punctuation to separate.

Examples:

Jim likes hockey;\_Jane enjoys soccer.

Jim likes hockey, and Jane enjoys soccer.

The stockmarket went up, but I still lost money.

3. Read it out loud to hear how it sounds.
4. Does it make sense?
5. Does it “flow” well? The way writing “flows” is sometimes called “paragraph rhythm.”
  - a. Use a variety of sentence lengths.

Example:

*Instead of:* He wore a blue shirt. He wore tan pants. He wore brown shoes. He was dressed for his first day on the job.

*Write:* Robert had dressed for his first day on the job. He wore a blue shirt, tan pants and brown shoes.

- b. Avoid repeating words.

Example:

*Instead of:* Celeste watched as a **car** hit the mailbox. The impact dented the fender of the **car**.

*Write:* Celeste watched as a **car** hit the mailbox.  
The impact dented the fender of the  
**vehicle.**

**Note to Specialist: This might be a good place to have the students experiment with rewriting any examples of “choppy” sounding writings. Many times school guidelines, traffic laws or classified ads are good sources.**

**COMPLETE LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-4  
“STOP THE PRESSES”**

E. Write the final copy and compare it to your rough draft.

**COMPLETE LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-5  
“ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL”**

F. Composing “compare and contrast” writing - a two part writing.

**Note to Specialist: Although this is a relatively easy writing to produce, many students give up quickly when they see a test question that begins with “Compare and contrast...” Encourage your students by emphasizing that this kind of writing is easily accomplished with a step by step approach.**

1. Compare - answers the question, “How are things similar?”
  - a. List similarities; include areas such as appearance, dates, function, personality, behavior, etc.
  - b. Arrange similarities in a logical order.  
Example:

Similarities of a guitar and banjo:

Both are stringed musical instruments.

Both are available as an acoustic or electric instrument.

Both are played using a pick or plectrum.

Both are tuned with use of the tuning keys located on the head of the instrument.

Both have a neck, frets and bridge.

Similarities have been arranged from broad to specific.

2. Contrast - answers the question, "How are things different?"
  - a. List differences.
  - b. Arrange the differences in a logical order.

Example:

Differences in a guitar and banjo:

The shape of the guitar body is like an hour glass or number 8, while the banjo body is a circle.

The guitar has six strings, but the banjo has only five.

All of the guitar's strings go from the bridge to the head; however, the banjo has 4 strings that go from the bridge to the head and 1 string that goes from the bridge to two thirds of the distance of the neck.

These differences have been arranged from broad to specific.

**COMPLETE LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-6**  
**"SIMILAR DIFFERENCES"**

**Administer Post-Assessment**

**LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-1**  
**“SEE YOU IN THE FUNNY PAPERS”**

**OBJECTIVE:** To provide supporting ideas and evidences to develop a main idea

**RESOURCES:**

- Newspaper with comic strips
- White-out
- Work Sheet—Learning Activity D.23-1
- Prepared comic strips for each student

**SUGGESTED TIME:** 45 minutes

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Find samples of comic strips in which two or more people are having a dialog.
2. Comic strips need to have at least 4 frames. It is better to have 6 to 8 frames.
3. You will need a comic strip for every two students in your class.
4. Cut out the desired comic strips and paste (or tape) them to the work sheet for Learning Activity D.23-1.
5. White-out the words the cartoon characters are speaking.
6. Divide your class into pairs.
7. Pass out a completed work sheet to each pair.
8. Go over the instructions with the students.
9. Have the students tape or staple their completed work sheets to the wall for all to read. (Caution, you might want to preview their work first.)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Which of the cartoons had an interesting approach or captured your attention?

2. Did facial expressions or body language of the cartoon characters add to the writing? If yes, in what way? If not, what was missing?

**LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-1**  
**“SEE YOU IN THE FUNNY PAPERS”**  
**WORK SHEET**

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Work together on this exercise as a team of two.
2. Below is a comic strip in which you will provide the words.
3. In the first frame or two, have one character express or communicate a main idea. (For example: “We need to go to town.” or “You’re in big trouble with the boss.”)
4. In the following frames, have the same character continue the dialog with supporting ideas. Pay attention to the facial expressions and body language of the characters and try to write something that matches.
5. Have the second (and others, if involved) character respond in a way that prompts the first character for more information. (For example: “That’s a good point, but I don’t know.” or “You might be on to something.”)
6. Conclude with the second character agreeing with the main idea presented in the first frame.

(Paste cartoon here.)



**LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-2**  
**“GETTING THERE IS HALF THE FUN”**

**OBJECTIVE:** To organize information in a logical sequence (chronological)

**RESOURCES:**

- Paper and pencil
- Pre-selected community locations written on a slip of paper (enough for each student to receive one)

**SUGGESTED TIME:** 30 minutes

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Give each student a slip of paper with the name of a well-known community location. Tell the students to make certain no one sees the location they receive.
2. Instruct the students to write out instructions explaining how to get from the school parking lot to that location. Have them write their instructions as if they were explaining it to a total stranger from out of town that knows nothing about the town.
3. Students may refer to big signs and stores, but avoid the use of landmarks that only residents would know.
4. After all students have finished writing their directions, have them read the directions out loud. How quickly can the class determine the final destination?

**Note to Specialist: This activity can make an interesting game if you have two separate classes. Using another class's directions, divide the classes into two teams. See which team is the quickest to identify the most destinations.**

**LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-3**  
**“AND NOW, A MESSAGE FROM OUR SPONSOR”**

**OBJECTIVE:** To demonstrate the ability to use supporting ideas and evidences to develop a main idea and convince a reader

**RESOURCES:**

- Pencil and paper
- List of approved products or services

**SUGGESTED TIME:** 1-4 hours

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Divide the class into teams of two or three.
2. Tell them they are the advertising agency for their favorite product (one they will pick.)

**Note to Specialist: You might want to give some guidance to the selection of products.**

3. The students will write a 30 and/or 60 second radio commercial (30 seconds = 75 words; 60 seconds = 150 words; count *all* words)
4. Each commercial will:
  - a. identify the product.
  - b. tell where to go or how to buy it.
  - c. provide one *main* point (for example: safety, better taste, more fun or better value).
  - d. give three product features that support the main idea.

**Note to Specialist: Have students record their commercial (including sound effects, etc.) or using *short* songs, create a class radio show with frequent breaks for commercials. Perform the commercials live or on tape.**

5. Have each team read their commercials out loud.

**LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-4**  
**“STOP THE PRESSES”**

**OBJECTIVE:** To demonstrate the ability to edit a piece of writing including spelling, grammar and “flow” or rhythm

**RESOURCES:**

- A variety of newspapers and magazines
- Pencil and paper

**SUGGESTED TIME:** 30 minutes

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Pass out newspapers and magazines to the class.
2. Explain that even professional writers don’t always “get it right,” especially when under deadlines like newspapers have.
3. Have each student select a story or article at least several columns long.
4. The students will check the story for spelling and grammar first. (Even with computers and spell check, many errors “slip through” today.)
5. Next have the students rewrite parts of the story, combining or separating sentences to improve the flow of the text.
6. Have the students share what they have found and improved upon with the class.

**Note to Specialist: During an activity like this, opportunities to examine current events, issues in the marketplace and employment issues will come up. This is a good time to integrate relative and important issues.**

**LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-5**  
**“ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL”**

**OBJECTIVE:** To demonstrate the ability to write a final draft of a supportive and persuasive composition

**RESOURCES:** Pencil and paper

**SUGGESTED TIME:** 1 hour

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Divide the class into groups of three.
2. Inform the class they are the campaign committee for a candidate they will select to run for “classroom president.”

**Note to Specialist: To make it interesting, this president could serve in some capacity, for some length of time (1 day, 1 week, etc.)**

3. The candidate may be from their group, but *must* be from the classroom.
4. The group must produce a 2-minute (300 word) campaign speech for classroom president that communicates evidence of character and leadership of the candidate.
5. After the speeches are written, the campaign committee should “work” with the candidate to prepare her/him to deliver the speech.
6. Students deliver their speeches and the class votes. (Hopefully, you won’t have a 6 to 10 way tie!)

**LEARNING ACTIVITY D.23-6**  
**“SIMILAR DIFFERENCES”**

**OBJECTIVE:** To demonstrate the ability to write a “compare and contrast” passage

**RESOURCES:**

- Index cards
- Pencil and paper

**SUGGESTED TIME:** 45 minutes

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Pass out one index card to each student.
2. Instruct the students to write down any one common, well-known object that is found on earth.
3. Collect the index cards.
4. Have the class get into pairs.
5. Randomly pass out the index cards, two to a pair.
6. Instruct the students to work together to prepare an answer to the question, “Compare and contrast \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. (Items on the cards go on the lines).
7. The team should include three ways the items are similar and three ways they are different.
8. Make certain the writing is organized (follow Sections F.1. through F.2 in module).
9. Students should check for spelling, grammar and paragraph rhythm.
10. Have students share their writings with the class.

**PRE-ASSESSMENT**  **POST-ASSESSMENT**

**DIRECTIONS:** Answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. Before you write, you should think about

2. Supporting ideas and evidences should relate directly to

3. When do you outline a logical order of points to include in your writing?

4. List two things that may be included in an opening paragraph.

5. List two things that may be included in a summary paragraph.

6. Give two kinds of things that might be corrected during the editing process.

7. What is a complete sentence?

8. What is a fragment?

9. The following are either complete sentences or fragments. Put a “✓” on the blank line in front of each of the complete sentences.

- \_\_\_ a. Upon further consideration of the resume I received
- \_\_\_ b. I see
- \_\_\_ c. Never before in my life had I been so excited
- \_\_\_ d. Sent to the mailroom for further processing
- \_\_\_ e. To be or not to be is the question

10. Correct the following run-on sentences:

a. I enjoy music of all kinds I am more particular about movies.

b. I don't get upset about small things life is too short.

c. I got the message she sent it two days ago.

11. For each of the following, give a word you could use to substitute for the term:

a. course: \_\_\_\_\_

b. building: \_\_\_\_\_

c. town: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Compare and contrast means to find the ways two things are

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.



13. T F Organizing points from least important to most important is a logical order.
14. T F Opening and closing sentences are used in the opening and summary paragraphs only.

## ANSWER KEY

PRE-ASSESSMENT     POST-ASSESSMENT

1. Before you write, you should think about what you are going to write.
2. Supporting ideas and evidences should relate directly to the main idea.
3. When do you outline a logical order of points to include in your writing?
  - During the pre-write or the creation of the rough draft.
4. List two things that may be included in an opening paragraph.
  - Main idea of writing, overview, purpose of the writing.
5. List two things that may be included in a summary paragraph.
  - Conclusions, summary, main idea, ties details together.
6. Give two kinds of things that might be corrected during the editing process.
  - Spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, understandability, paragraph rhythm or “flow.”
7. What is a complete sentence?
  - A sentence with a subject and a verb.
8. What is a fragment?
  - A group of words without a subject and a verb.

9. The following are either complete sentences or fragments. Put a “✓” on the blank line in front of each of the complete sentences.

\_\_\_ a. Upon further consideration of the resume I received

✓ b. I see

✓ c. Never before in my life had I been so excited

\_\_\_ d. Sent to the mailroom for further processing

✓ e. To be or not to be is the question

10. Correct the following run-on sentences:

a. I enjoy music of all kinds I am more particular about movies.

- I enjoy music of all kinds, but I am more particular about movies.

b. I don't get upset about small things life is too short.

- I don't get upset about small things; life is too short.

c. I got the message she sent it two days ago.

- I got the message; she sent it two days ago.

11. For each of the following, give a word you could use to substitute for the term:

a. course: Answers will vary

b. building: Answers will vary

c. town: Answers will vary

12. Compare and contrast means to find the ways two things are similar and different.

13. True

14. False

**ANSWER KEY**  
**LEARNING ACTIVITY: D.23-1**

- Answers will vary

**ANSWER KEY**  
**LEARNING ACTIVITY: D.23-2**

- Answers will vary

**ANSWER KEY**  
**LEARNING ACTIVITY: D.23-3**

- Answers will vary

**ANSWER KEY**  
**LEARNING ACTIVITY: D.23-4**

- Answers will vary

**ANSWER KEY**  
**LEARNING ACTIVITY: D.23-5**

- Answers will vary

**ANSWER KEY**  
**LEARNING ACTIVITY: D.23-6**

- Answers will vary