

CREATING BETTER WRITERS

Organization: Have students identify the topic sentence in the writing sample, in which the writer states the main idea of the essay. Then have students list the details that explain and support the main idea.

Before students revise their essays, explain that *organization* is the plan, or structure, that writers use to present their ideas in the most effective way. In an essay, for example, a writer may decide to first state opinions and then support those opinions with facts and details. Point out that each writer should choose the type of organization that works best for his or her particular topic.

Write the following organizing tips on the board. Tell students to use the tips as they revise their writing.

- Write an opening sentence or paragraph that grabs hold of the reader's attention and suggests what is coming.
- Check that the transitions between paragraphs create a bridge, or link, from one idea to the next.
- Make sure every detail adds a little more information about the main idea.
- Write a strong concluding paragraph that brings together all the important ideas.

Before you write a first draft of your essay, read the following model. Notice the characteristics of an expository essay.

Jeremy Ng

My Environment

New York City is an interesting environment. It includes a surprising variety of living and nonliving things.

Nonliving things, such as tall buildings, cars, buses, and subways, are everywhere. Subways, bridges, and tunnels link the five boroughs of New York City.

Many people who live outside New York City don't know about the variety of living things there. Central Park has green grass, tall trees, and colorful flowers. Many small animals, such as chipmunks and squirrels, live in the park. So do many kinds of birds and insects. Of course, pests, such as rats, mice, and cockroaches, are also part of the environment.

New York has a great variety of living and nonliving things. Its unique environment includes buildings, cars, roads, and bridges as well as people and many other living things.

The introductory paragraph tells what the essay is about—the main idea.

The body paragraphs explain and support the main idea.

The conclusion summarizes the main idea.

2 Draft Use the model essay and your organizational diagrams to help you write your essay. Include an introductory paragraph, two body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph.

- Introduce your main idea in an interesting way, so that your readers will want to know more and will read the rest of your essay. Reread the introductory paragraph of the model essay. How does the student get you interested in his topic?
- Use your organizational diagrams to write your two body paragraphs. These paragraphs should include details and examples that support your main idea. Be sure to include details about living and nonliving things.
- Conclude your essay by summarizing your main idea. Explain why your environment is special.

3 Edit Work in pairs. Trade papers and read each other's essays. Use the questions in the editing checklist to evaluate each other's work.

EDITING CHECKLIST

Did you . . .

- ▶ introduce your main idea clearly?
- ▶ include two body paragraphs?
- ▶ use details and examples to support your main idea?
- ▶ write a concluding paragraph?
- ▶ use correct subject-verb agreement?

4 Revise Revise your essay. Add information and correct mistakes, if necessary.

5 Publish Share your essay with your teacher and classmates.



A lake in Central Park, New York City ▶

USING THE EDITING CHECKLIST

Have pairs of students exchange essays and read them through silently before they use the checklist to look for anything that needs correcting.

ASSESS

Portfolio: Include the expository essays in students' assessment portfolios for comparison with later assignments.

REACHING ALL STUDENTS

LANGUAGE LEVELS

Beginning: Have students draw pictures or take photographs of their environment. Help them use the visuals to generate sentences. As students dictate information, have them categorize their sentences under the headings *Living Things* and *Nonliving Things*. Students can generate an opening sentence to identify their environment. Then they can use their sentences to build body paragraphs and write a closing sentence at the end.

Advanced: Have students use adjectives and personification to make their writing clearer and more interesting. Tell them to organize their ideas and write their first drafts. As they edit their work with a partner, encourage them to discuss descriptive words and phrases that can be added to clarify each point. Tell pairs to ask themselves, *Did I introduce my topic in a clever, interesting way? Have I included enough descriptive details to support my main idea? Does my conclusion summarize my main idea?*