7 Steps to Writing Success

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By Bonnie Terry, M. Ed., BCET

Bonnie Terry, M. Ed., BCET has been an Auburn, CA resident for 21 years and businesswoman for 20 of those years. As both a Board Certified Educational Therapist and Learning Disability Specialist for over 40 years, Bonnie has changed the lives of thousands of people.

Bonnie's passion and life mission is to make learning easy for everyone, from school age students through adults. She specializes in helping parents and teachers/other professionals make learning reading, writing, spelling, study skills, test taking, and math easy for all ages even for those that have a learning problem, learning disability, dyslexia, ADHD, or are just taking too long to complete their homework.

Currently she assists parents in diagnosing their children's learning difficulties, teaching them how to help their children themselves. She has designed and created effective learning tools: books, games, and guides including a neuro-developmental behaviorally based assessment to help parents to improve their children's learning skills or their own learning skills.

Bonnie's curriculum, which can be seen at www.BonnieTerryLearning.com, is sold world-wide. Los Angeles Unified School District now uses Bonnie's materials in 35 schools for special needs students. Bonnie consults with parents throughout the world. She has also spoken in four cities in China on how to teach reading and writing. She assists parents with getting help within the school system and beyond. She also trains adults to become practitioners of the Awaken the Scholar Within Programs.

www.bonnieterrylearning.com

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7 Critical Steps for Note-Taking Success

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7 Critical Steps for Note Taking Success

One of the best ways to improve writing skills is to improve note taking skills.

Note taking becomes easy when you know step-by-step HOW to take notes. There are specific words to listen for or make note of while you are reading. These are what we call the structure words:

Who (person or event), What (are they doing or did they do), Where (places), When (dates, time periods, seasons), How (did they do it), and Why (did they do it)

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

How?

Why?

Also listen for sequential information. (first, second, third, last)

The 7 Steps

1. Choose a note taking form (from *Ten Minutes to Better Study Skills*, included with the ASW Writing Program).
2. List any pictures or charts that are on the page.
3. Preview the paragraph or section by noting the topics and bold-print words and their definitions.
4. Read the paragraph or section.
5. Think: What is this telling me about?
6. Write down in your own words the important points.
7. Ask a question from what you wrote.

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Step 1.
Choose a Note-Taking Form

(from Bonnie Terry Learning's *Ten Minutes to Better Study Skills*)

You will notice there are different ways to take notes, depending on how you need or plan on using them. The following are numerous types of note taking forms found in *Ten Minutes to Better Study Skills.*

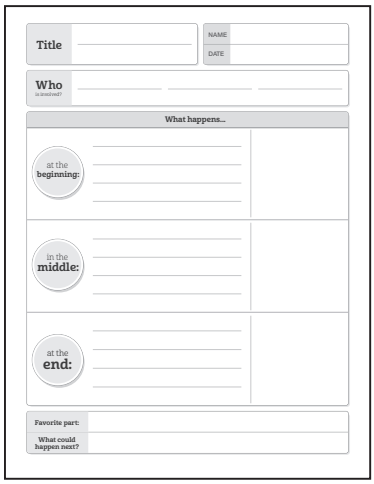
Stories or Narrative Note Taking
Use a format that shows the beginning, middle, and end of the story. If the selection is lengthy, you may want to be able to show the intermediate points in the story as well as the beginning, middle, and end. Take your narratives a step further and use the form designed to get at the: *who, what, where, when, how,* and *why* of the story (5 'W' Organizer).

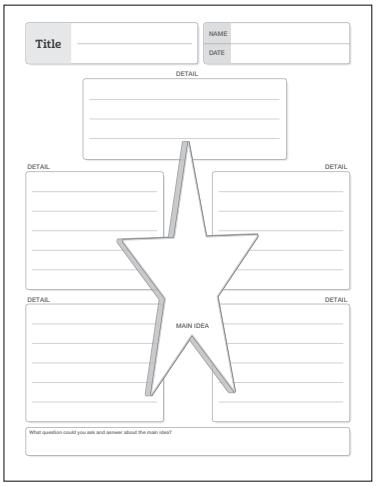
Informational or Expository Note Taking
Use a form that easily lends itself to the main idea and supporting details.

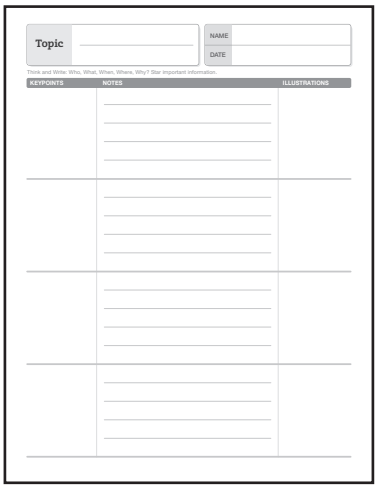
Text Book/Lecture/Video Note Taking
Use a form that lends itself to the format of *Text Books/Lectures/Videos* are typically written in: main topic, subtopics, keywords, illustrations, pictures, or graphs.

Cause and Effect Note Taking
Use a form that lends itself to easily show the cause and effect of a particular topic.

TIP: You are reading and listening for the *who, what, where, when, how,* and *why*.







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Compare and Contrast

If you need compare and contrast the topics you have read about, use a form that helps you prepare for that type of writing (Compare and Contrast form, pages 45-48).

Paragraph Writing

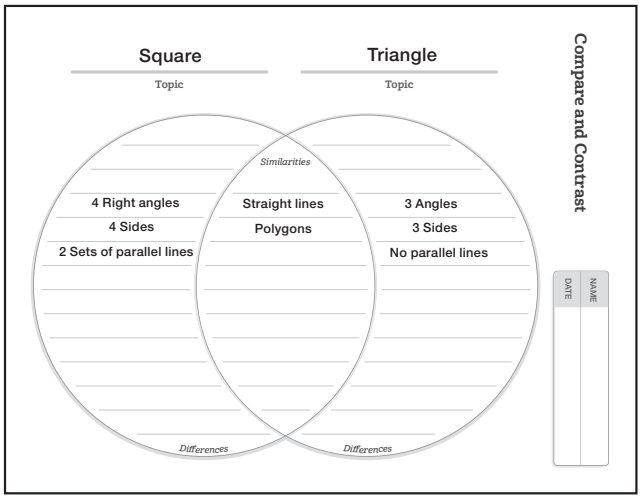
To teach the basic paragraph and turn your notes into a basic paragraph, transition them from one of the above forms into the basic paragraph form (Hamburger Paragraph, pages 49-56).

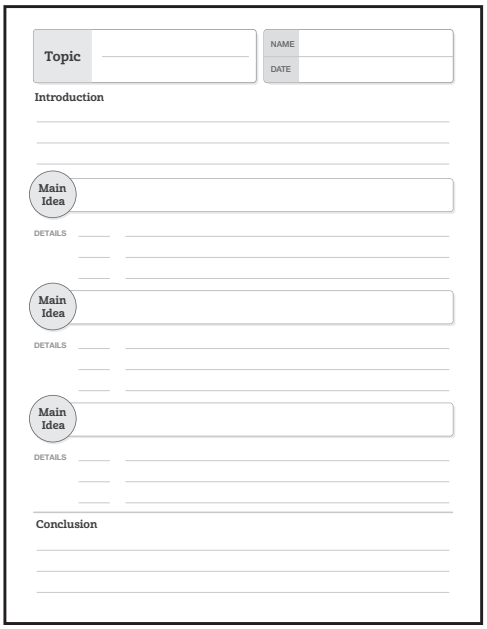
Essay Writing

To make the transition from writing one paragraph to writing the basic essay, start with the basic essay form. Once you are comfortable with the basic Hamburger Essay, transition to writing the five paragraph essay (pages 57-60).

Writing an Outline

For larger projects you may need to write an overall outline of the projec.





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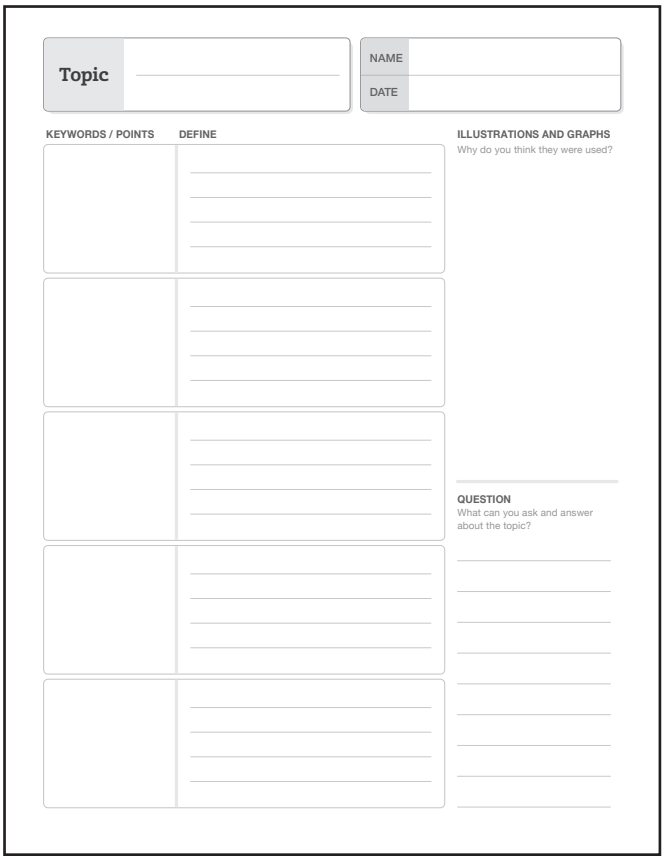
Step 2.

Preview the selection by listing any pictures or charts that are on the page.

To get the most out of what you read, each time you open a textbook or research book, list the pictures, illustrations, graphs and charts.

This step will help you focus on them and what they are telling you regarding the text you will be reading.

It also gives you a 'picture in your mind' of where in the chapter those pictures, illustrations or graphs are which helps improve memory and comprehension skills.



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Step 3.

Preview the paragraph or section by noting the topics in bold print.

Every time you read a text book or research book, there is a preliminary activity you should do to get the most out of what you read.

When you look at the title of the selection or story, read the topics of chapter titles, look at the pictures, illustration, or graphs that are provided you create a mindset for reading, and you are more apt to understand what you are reading.

This third step is mainly referring to any type of textbook reading. Words are printed in bold print or are highlighted, meaning they are important. If understanding those highlighted bold print words is all you do, you will be ahead of the game. Authors and publishers put the most important words and concepts they want you to understand in bold print.

Fill out the Text Book Note Taking form with the main topics, sub-topics, and highlighted words.
(This is a pre-reading activity for you.)

The definitions of the highlighted words are typically in the words following the bold word. Sometimes the description is contained in the same sentence the word is in.

TIP: You can also keep track of vocabulary words according to subjects and categories in a separate spiral notebook.

Going over any new vocabulary that will be introduced ahead of time will help the selection make more sense. Your comprehension will improve, and you will also be able to take better notes from doing this pre-reading activity.

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Step 4.

Read the paragraph, selection or story.

Now you are ready to read the paragraph, selection, or story. So enjoy yourself, read.

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Step 5.

Think: What is this telling me about?

Story / Narrative

If the selection is a story, a narrative, think about what is happening.

1. How did the story go from the beginning to the middle to the end?
2. Can you pull out descriptions?
3. Can you tell a part you liked?
4. Can you tell what you didn't like?
5. What are some characteristics of the characters in the story?
6. Who was your favorite character?
7. Who was your least favorite?

Informational Reading / Expository

If the selection is informational, expository, think about the topic.

1. What is the selection telling you about?
2. Can you pull out the main idea?
3. Can you pull out supporting details?
4. Can you pull out the conclusion?
5. Did the author have a point of view?
6. Do you agree with the author?
7. What did you learn from reading this?

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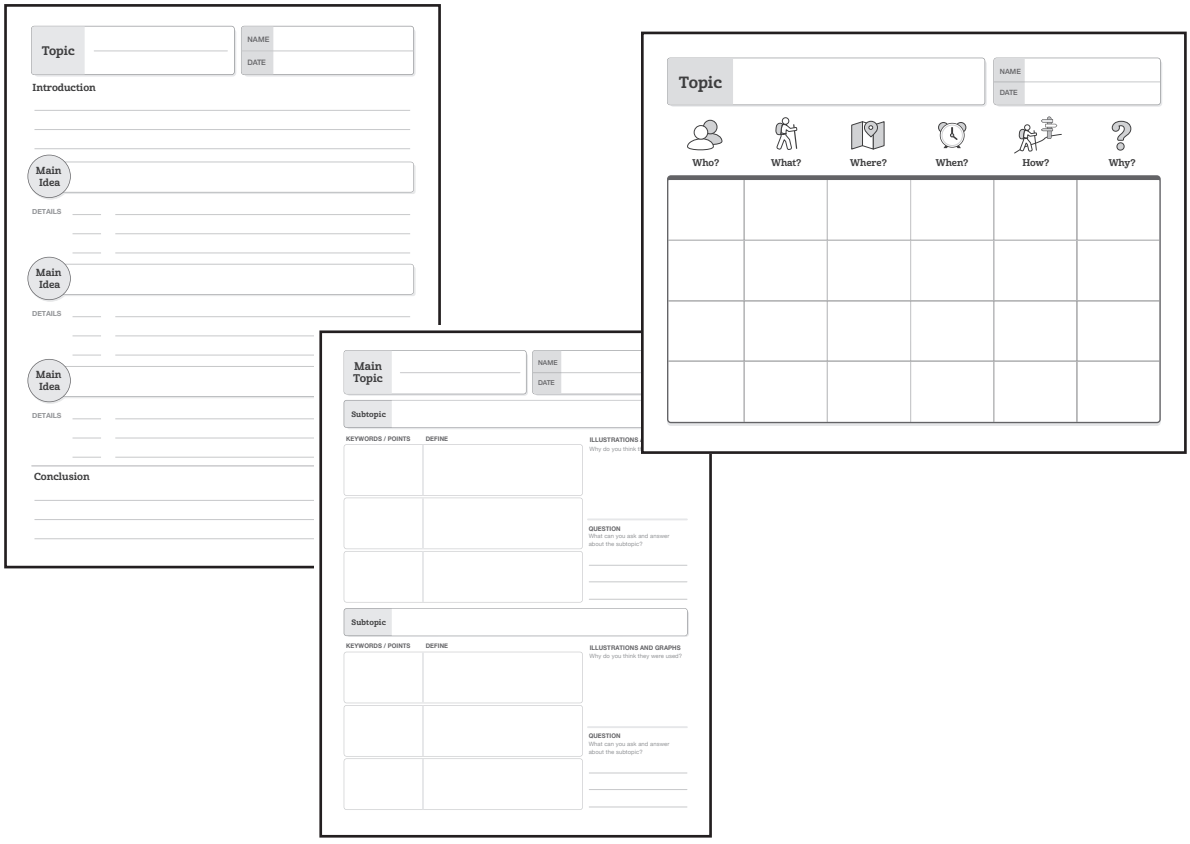
Step 6.

Write down in your own words the important points.

Use the note taking form you chose earlier and take notes from what you read.

TIP: Remember, these are notes. You may want them to be written in complete sentences, but you may also just want enough written to jog your memory about what the selection is about. You can do whatever works best for you.



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Step 7:

Ask a question about what you've read, watched, or listened to and taken notes on.

This is the final step to note taking success. This is the step where we get true comprehension. It helps you to fully understand what you have read, and then takes you a step further in the processing and retention of it.

For each section you took notes on, come up with a question you could ask and then even answer it. This is the way to turn your notes into a true study guide.

See the example in *Ten Minutes to Better Study Skills*.

Once you have improved your note taking skills, you are ready to improve your overall writing skills.

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7 Critical Steps of the Writing Process

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Sentence Writing Tips

Before you begin the 7 Step process to improving overall writing skills, it is important to first improve your overall sentence writing skills.

We do this by focussing on sentences, the components of every paragraph and essay.

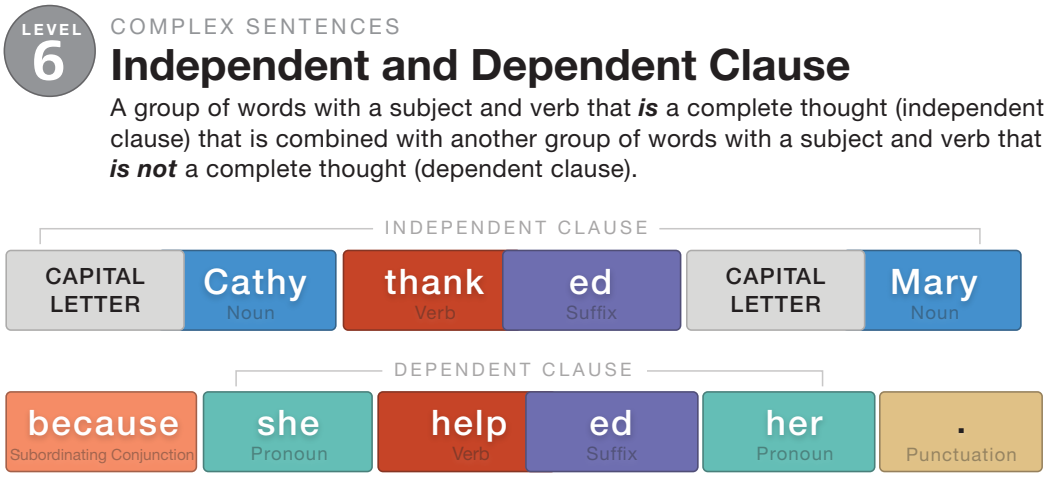
There are 6 basic sentence types: four simple sentences, compound sentences, and complex sentences. (Play the *Sentence Zone* game to learn them. See example below.)

Within the six basic sentence types there is a specific sentence hierarchy that begins with a simple subject/verb sentence and goes up through complex sentences.

For example, the first four sentences of the sentence hierarchy looks like this:

The boy runs.
The boy runs up the hill.
The young boy runs up the hill.
The young boy runs up the hill before dark.

We go through all of the sentence hierarchy step-by-step in the ***ASW Writing Program.***



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7 Critical Steps of the Writing Process

1. Plan your time for the writing project. See the Time Management Tools Section of T*en Minutes to Better Study Skills.*
2. Get organized: pick a topic, make a plan, do your research, take notes, and organize your thoughts. *Ten Minutes to Better Study Skills* and the *ASW Reading, Writing, and Study Skills Program* will help you with this.
3. Write your rough draft.
4. Read you rough draft over, thinking about your main idea or thesis
5. Rewrite your paragraph or essay with the corrections.
6. Check again for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation errors. (The *Writer's Easy Reference Guide* will help you with this and will even giving you alternative transition words.)
7. Turn your paper in.

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Step 1.

Plan Your Time.

(*Ten Minutes to Better Study Skills* will help you with this.)

Small Writing Projects

When you are writing a paragraph or a summary, you need to plan out your main idea and supporting details. Using the paragraph writing forms will help you with this.

Large Writing Projects

Think about the purpose of your writing.

1. What is it that you are going to write about?
2. Why are you writing about it?

These first few thoughts will help you to define what you need to do to accomplish the writing task.

Make a Plan

Next, make a plan.

1. When will you write?
2. How will you get the information you need?
3. How will you take your notes for the project or paper?
4. How will you organize them to make the actual writing easy?

The forms/templates in *Ten Minutes to Better Study Skills* will help you with this. In addition to the ones mentioned in the note taking section of this book, it also includes essay and research paper writers in the book as well as a variety of planning calendars.

If you need step-by-step help, see our *ASW Writing Program* or our *ASW Reading, Writing, and Study Skills Program* where Bonnie teaches you with step-by-step video lessons.

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Step 2.

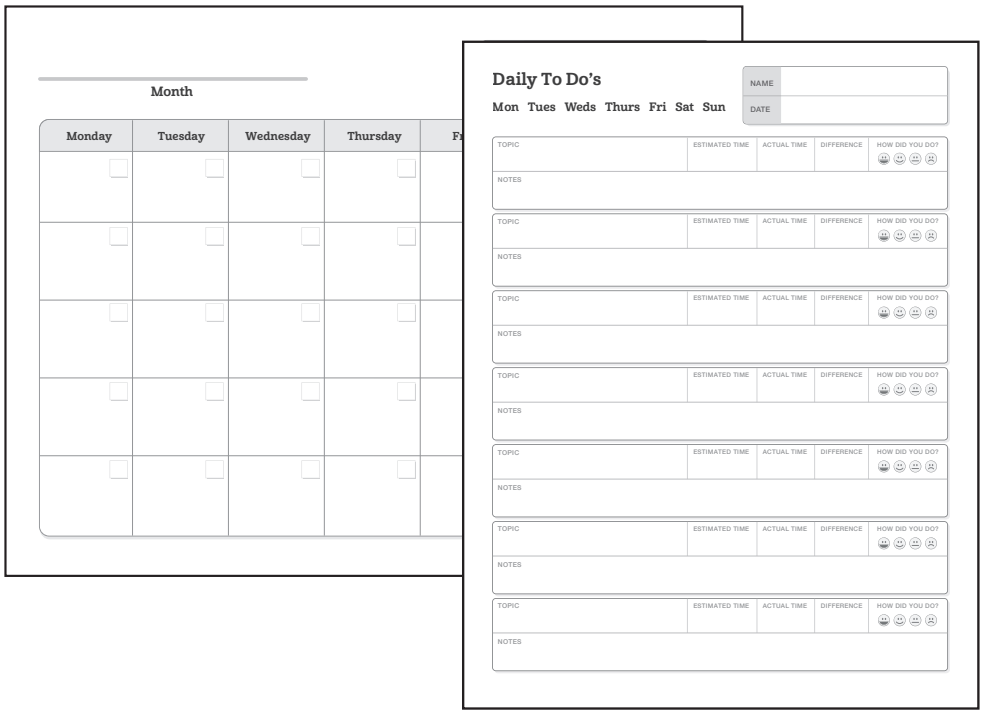
Get Organized: pick a topic, do research, take notes, and organize your thoughts.

(*Ten Minutes to Better Study Skills* will help you with this.)

The first step to writing any paper, whether it is a paragraph, essay, or research paper is to look at your calendar and plan out when you will do each of the following steps.

1. Pick a topic.
2. Do the research.
3. Write the rough draft.
4. Correct the rough draft and write the final copy.
5. Turn in your paper.

Use the time management tools that are in *Ten Minutes to Better Study Skills.*



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Step 3.

Write your rough draft.

1. Review the notes you made on your note taking forms.
2. Transfer your notes into the paragraph writing form or one of the essay writing forms.
3. Think about the order of your sentences. Do you need to re-order them? Then recopy them into your rough draft.

TIP: You may want to do this in a spiral notebook so you have an easy way to see your child's writing progress from one month to the next.

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Step 4.

Read you rough draft over, thinking about your main idea or thesis:

TIP: It is helpful to read your rough draft aloud. You will then catch more mistakes or changes that you want to make.

- Did you support it?
- Do your thoughts flow?
- Do you need to rearrange the order of your sentences?
- Are your ideas linked clearly? Check your transitions.
- (Use the *Writer's Easy Reference Guide* for additional transition words.)
- Did you vary your types of sentences?

Remember the different types of sentences you made in The Sentence Zone game, or refer to the different types in the *Writer's Easy Reference Guide*. Make sure to use a variety of sentence types in your writing. This will make it more interesting.

- Can you add anything else that would make each paragraph stronger?
- Check for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation errors.

The Writer's Easy Reference Guide will help you with capitalization and punctuation rules.

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Step 5.

Rewrite your paragraph or essay with the corrections.

Now it's time to rewrite your paragraph for the final copy. You want to make it as neat as possible.

TIP: Check your paragraphs to see that you have at least one sentence in it that has adjectives and prepositional phrases. That will make the paragraph more interesting.

TIP: Remember, your work, your paper, is a reflection of you. Sometimes your papers are the only thing someone sees and neatness will give a good impression. It is something you should be proud of. So, do it right and make it as neat as possible.

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Step 6.

Check again for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation errors.

You're just about done now. Read the final copy aloud again for readability. While you read your paper aloud, take one more look at it. Check again for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation errors. make any corrections. Recopy it one more time if you need to. (If your paper is messy.)

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Step 7.
Turn your paper in.

It's time to put your paper into your backpack, take it to school, and hand it in.
Be proud of yourself for doing such a good job!

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Additional Resources

For more information on writing tips, go to www.bonnieterrylearning.com

Have any questions? Schedule a complimentary consultation with Bonnie Terry at www.bonnieterrylearning.com/consultation

Find more information on all of our products and programs including:

Ten Minutes to Better Study Skills
The Writer's Easy Reference Guide
The Sentence Zone Game

To get your hands on the products mentioned, go to www.bonnieterrylearning.com.

Enroll in our Awaken the Scholar Within Programs with step-by-step video lessons...

Awaken the Scholar Within Writing Program
Awaken the Scholar Within Reading, Writing, and Study Skills Program which includes the *ASW Writing Program* and the *ASW Test-Taking Strategies Program*

Go to the ASW Program Page here.

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