THE EXPOSITORY PILLAR

INTRODUCTION
Lead/Topic Sentence

Main Idea#1_____________

Detail       Detail
Detail       Detail

Main Idea#2_____________

Detail       Detail
Detail       Detail

Main Idea#3_____________

Detail       Detail
Detail       Detail

CONCLUSION
Organization

Expository writing, by its very nature, requires careful organization. In order to deliver information in a way in which the reader can easily grasp, information must be arranged and presented in a logical, sequential manner, with like details grouped together. Often times, students, when writing about a topic, simply list details in random order, as they come to mind. This abstract random collection of facts does not lend itself to solid elaboration on the part of the author, or clear comprehension on the part of the reader.

So how can we best organize exposition? As stated earlier, the basic organizational plan for an expository report, essay, or article, is as follows:

- **Introduction Paragraph** - The first paragraph in which the author grabs the reader’s attention (lead) and tells the reader what the entire piece will be about (topic sentence).
- **Body of the Piece** - A number of paragraphs, each with a broad yet distinct main idea sentence, which explains what the paragraph is about, followed by a variety of supporting details. (Often times teachers require three paragraphs in the body of the piece, however, two well-developed paragraphs, or 4, 5, or 6, paragraphs work equally as well - the key is for the author to write as many paragraphs as needed to fully explore the topic. Requiring three paragraphs can result in a formulaic, one size fits all approach that limits the author.)
- **Conclusion Paragraph** - The final paragraph which creatively reiterates the main ideas and restates the thesis or topic sentence in a general way. This may be accomplished in a straightforward, although not literal repetition, or it may be implied.
Graphic Organizer - The Expository Pillar

The graphic organizer we use to best illustrate this organizational framework is the EXPOSITORY PILLAR, pictured on the next page. There are a number of reasons that this pillar is helpful.

• It is set up so that the eye moves top to bottom, left to right, in the same way that the resulting written composition will be assembled - the same way in which we read. When the topic and basic main ideas are arranged in this manner, it provides more logical structure to the author than the traditional web, which lends itself to abstract random construction.

• The introduction and conclusion are the broadest, most general parts of the piece, and are, likewise, represented by the largest sections.

• The main ideas, which are more specific than the topic, are represented by a box smaller than the introduction and conclusion sections. Each main idea is supported by a variety of details.

• The details are the most specific elements, represented by the smallest, most numerous boxes.

We use the pillar as a guide to organization and elaboration. It is used in conjunction with a simple, succinct, and practical PREWRITING PLANNER that clearly represents the TOPIC and each MAIN IDEA - in other words, a simple summary of the essential outline of the piece. During their prewriting and planning, students learn how to generate broad yet distinct main ideas and to represent them within the simple prewriting planner/summarizing framework:

| TOPIC: _______________________ | Ex. TOPIC: The Rain Forest |
| MAIN IDEA #1: _______________ | MAIN IDEA #1: Climate /Weather |
| MAIN IDEA #2: _______________ | MAIN IDEA #2: Plants/Trees |
| MAIN IDEA #3: _______________ | MAIN IDEA #3: Animals |
| MAIN IDEA #4: _______________ | MAIN IDEA #4: Deforestation |
Table of Contents

Introduction .............................................................................................................. p. 1 - 5

Section 1: Recognizing Genre/Organization

Genre - Narrative, Expository, and Persuasive Writing ........................................ p. 7 - 12
Analyzing Expository Texts .................................................................................. p. 13 - 65
Comparing Expository Pieces .............................................................................. p. 66 - 88
Irrelevant, Extraneous Details .............................................................................. p. 89 - 95
Cut and Paste Organization ................................................................................ p. 96 - 114

Section 2: Broad Yet Distinct Main Ideas

Introduction to Broad Yet Distinct Main Ideas ...................................................... p.115 - 117
Pick, List, and Choose Activities ........................................................................ p. 127 - 130
Main Idea Lessons ............................................................................................... p. 118 - 177
Main Idea Sentence Starters .............................................................................. p. 158
Thesaurus of General Adjectives ........................................................................ p. 159
Sentence Variety and Word Choice ................................................................. p. 178 - 183, 236 - 239

Section 3: Elaboration - Detail-Generating Questions

Introduction to Elaboration .................................................................................... p. 185 - 188
Elaboration Lessons ............................................................................................. p. 189 - 235
Scripted Elaboration Lesson ............................................................................. p. 217 - 219
Scripted Guided Practice Lesson ..................................................................... p. 219 - 221
## Table of Contents (cont.)

### Section 4: Powerful Supporting Detail - the “Golden Bricks”:
#### Another Step toward Fully Developed Paragraphs
- Powerful Supporting Details - Quotes, Statistics, Descriptive Segments, Anecdotes, Amazing Facts ......................................................... p. 241 - 259
- Transitional Words and Phrases ............................................................... p. 260 - 266
- Menu of Transitional Words and Phrases ................................................. p. 262
- Paragraph Analysis ................................................................................. p. 266 - 268
- Paragraph Revision ................................................................................ p. 269 - 288
- Using Informational Data to Create Well Developed Paragraphs .......... p. 293 - 299

### Section 5: Introductions and Conclusions
- Introductions ........................................................................................... p. 301 - 342
- Conclusions .............................................................................................. p. 343 - 382

### Section 6: Prompts, Projects, and Process Writing Assignments
- Opportunities for Application ................................................................. p. 383 - 435
- Expository Writing Rubric ....................................................................... p. 420
- Anchor Set ............................................................................................... p. 421 - 425
- Process Writing Timeline ........................................................................ p. 426 - 427
- Special Projects ....................................................................................... p. 428 - 435

©2005 Empowering Writers, LLC
How is the “Empowering Writers” approach to teaching writing unique? And how will these activities meet student and teacher needs?

To answer that, think about the following observations:

- Teachers interpret “writing as a process” differently, and thus deliver writing instruction in vastly different ways.
- There is often little consistency across or between grade levels in the teaching of writing.
- There is often little consistency in the vocabulary/terminology of writing across and between grade levels, resulting in student (and teacher) confusion.
- Many teachers feel insecure in their own ability as writers. Though they can certainly distinguish good writing from less than satisfactory writing, they have few specific strategies on how to move children forward.
- Most student writing that we see lacks focus, elaborative detail, voice, and a clear “sense of purpose”.
- Managing a writing as a process classroom in which a diverse group of students are working on a number of different projects is difficult. It is extremely challenging to assess and meet individual needs and to provide appropriate instruction designed to move individuals forward.

Does this sound familiar? Our objective was to design lessons that would instruct both teachers and students in specific skills that all good writers possess. This approach is quite different from the free write/conference/mini-lesson sequence so often practiced in the whole language classroom. Our approach provides students with a solid foundation for process writing by teaching basic skills before they begin to write. Skill lessons build upon one another in a logical sequence with clear-cut lessons for teachers to follow. The rationale for this came from the experience growing up in a family of artists and musicians - an artist learns and practices composition, form, and perspective before setting the brush to the canvas. A pianist learns scales and arpeggios before tackling a sonata. As writers, we know that students could benefit by learning about focus, elaboration, effective introductions, well-developed paragraphs, and powerful conclusions in much the same way. They could set about writing with these skills up their sleeves, thus eliminating a good amount of the frustrating revision work that results from a conference and mini-lesson after the first draft.
What is Expository Writing?

Without a doubt, expository writing is, in a practical sense, the genre that is required most often in school and the workplace. In the middle grades and beyond, writing to relay information via report writing, research papers, essays, responses to literature, writing across the curriculum, how-to pieces, compare and contrast - these become the backbone and expression of academic growth. As children move from a stance of “learning to read” to a stance of “reading to learn”, they begin to organize and express their thinking through expository writing.

The college admission or job application essay, a query letter, proposal, inter-office memo all fall into the category of expository writing. Certainly, in school and in the workplace, those with strong expository writing skills have a clear advantage. Therefore, teaching children expository writing skills, from the primary grades on, becomes critical. The purpose of this manual is to address the range of skills necessary for effective expository writing - with introductory foundation lessons for students in early grades (grades 2 and 3), and building on these lessons in developmentally appropriate ways. The result is a comprehensive program for teaching expository writing to students in grade 2 through grade 8. The lessons build upon one another in a logical, sequential fashion, and are differentiated for the range of students in the individual classroom.

Expository Writing Defined

Exposition covers a number of subgenres:

• the informational essay
• the “how-to” piece
• the “compare/contrast” piece
• “response to literature”

All of these “subgenres” share a common purpose - WRITING THAT IS CRAFTED FOR THE PURPOSE OF GIVING INFORMATION. The information needs to be well organized in a logical, sequential manner. The basic organizational framework for all of these expository subgenres consists of an INTRODUCTION paragraph with an attention-grabbing lead, followed by a THESIS STATEMENT or TOPIC SENTENCE which, in a broad sense, tells the reader what the piece of writing is all about. The BODY of the piece consists of a number of paragraphs, each with a broad yet distinct MAIN IDEA and a variety of specific SUPPORTING DETAILS. The CONCLUSION paragraph creatively restates each main idea.
Introduction to Expository Writing (cont.)

Whether writing an informational essay or report, a “how-to”, a “compare/contrast” piece, or a “response to literature”, the author must bring a number of skills to the task.

The skills which are necessary to write effective expository pieces and highlighted in this book are as follows:

- recognizing and understanding genre
- organization of information within the expository essay
- writing broad yet distinct main ideas
- writing a variety of supporting details (detail-generating questions)
- writing a variety of powerful details (quotes, statistics, amazing facts, anecdotes, descriptive segments)
- writing attention-grabbing introductions with powerful leads and clear thesis statements (topic sentences)
- writing conclusions in which main ideas are creatively restated

Each activity is coded as follows:

- suggested for grades 2 - 3
- suggested for grades 4 - 5
- suggested for grades 6 and up
- easily adapted for grades 2 - 5
- easily adapted for grades 4 and up
- easily adapted for all grades

Our objectives, relative to grade level, are as follows:

In grades 2 and 3, students learn the purpose and organizational framework for expository writing, and recognize that related details are grouped in paragraphs. They can be expected to write a simple piece of exposition, guided by main ideas provided by the teacher. They would be expected to generate appropriate supporting details.
During grades 4 - 6, as students shift from a “learning to read” to a “reading to learn” mode, a greater focus and expectation is established. In these grades, the bulk of the skills, including generating broad yet distinct main ideas, and more sophisticated introductions and conclusions, can be effectively mastered.

In grades 7 and up students refine their skills through a variety of applications - essays, reports, research papers, and essay exams.

You will find, as you move through the book, that many activities can be adapted for just about any age - what will differ is the level of sophistication/vocabulary in the content of responses, the level of mastery of mechanics, spelling, grammar, and the length and depth of the response. Use your professional discretion in choosing the activities that best suit your students’ needs - the designations are intended only as suggestions.

In situations where these materials are being used school-wide across many grade levels, we suggest that you work together as a school to decide which activities are best suited to particular grades without duplication.

For ease of use, the book is divided into sections according to the skills presented. There are countless extension and enrichment activities and creative connections which include suggestions for art, technology, and research projects. These creative connections also suggest ways in which you can “write across the curriculum”.

For comprehensive information on the entire line of Empowering Writers books, posters, videos, and CDs, as well as information on professional development opportunities and workshops we offer, visit our website at:

www.empoweringwriters.com
Using These Materials

Using these Materials

An in-depth introduction to each skill area is provided, along with clear lesson plans for each activity.

- All teacher information and lesson plan pages which precede the student activities are coded with a border of “Apples”.

- Student reproducible reference and activity pages are coded with a border of “Pencils”.

The METHODOLOGY we recommend is as follows:

1.) INTRODUCE the concept or skill through published examples. We recommend that you use high quality nonfiction magazine articles and nonfiction books that rely heavily on text (as opposed to graphs, illustrations, charts, and diagrams) to demonstrate the specific techniques presented.

2.) MODEL the technique for the class, “thinking out loud” the thoughts and questions of an author. Specific questioning techniques as well as sample passages and examples are provided within the teacher preparation pages to assist you in this critical step. Students will not demonstrate the skills presented by simply reading, discussing, and analyzing exposition. Modeling is the necessary bridge between recognizing the techniques and applying them. The various skills are presented and modeled in isolation, allowing the students to focus on a specific technique, without being overwhelmed by the pressure of constantly producing entire pieces of writing. Another huge benefit of modeling is vocabulary building and fluency.

3.) Numerous GUIDED PRACTICE opportunities for students are provided through the use of the reproducible student pages. First, the teacher models the technique highlighted on the student page, asking effective detail-generating questions, eliciting thoughtful responses from students which are then incorporated by the teacher into the model. Students are affirmed in their efforts and then encouraged to try the same activity on their own. They benefit through the teacher’s effective use of vocabulary, language, and the specific technique being modeled. The teacher circulates, commenting on individual examples, encouraging, and assisting where necessary.

4.) After numerous MODELING and GUIDED PRACTICE opportunities the students’ APPLICATION of these skills will emerge in examples of both timed and process writing.

5.) Keep in mind that you do not need to complete each activity with your students. We present numerous learning opportunities from which you can choose. Use your professional discretion in determining which activities will best meet your students’ needs. Specific lesson plans precede each student activity sheet.

* PLEASE SEE PG. 217 - PG. 219 IN THE SECTION ON “DETAIL-GENERATING QUESTIONS” FOR A SAMPLE SCRIPTED LESSON ILLUSTRATING THE USE OF THESE MODELING AND GUIDED PRACTICE TECHNIQUES.
**Lesson Plans –**

**Using Detail Generating Questions**

**pp. 222-235**

**Objective:** Students learn to apply the detail generating questions independently. This requires them to recognize the weaknesses in the sample segment and to apply the detail generating questions prescriptively. (Activity 1, 2, and 4 include the insertion of detail generating questions for student use. Activity 3 and 5 require students to apply the questions independently.)

**Procedure:**

1.) Choose an appropriate activity and photocopy it for your students. Make a transparency and project it for the class. Read the sample “before” paragraph aloud. Discuss the weaknesses.

2.) Begin to **MODEL** (see scripted lesson, pp. 217-221) the revision by approaching each weakness with the corresponding detail generating question. Refer to the teacher pages which follow each activity sheet. Here, a sample revision appears, in which the responses to the questions are included. However, it is critical that you include student responses in your revision. The sample revisions are provided as examples only.

3.) After modeling, possibly on another day, begin **GUIDED PRACTICE** (see scripted lesson, following MODELED lesson, next pages). Invite the class to try their hand at the same example. Point out the sentence starters on the bottom of the activity sheet.

4.) Also, look for redundant sentence variety - ex. a number of sentences that begin with “You can...,” “There are,” etc. The use of the sentence starters can help address this weakness.

5.) On the page following each exercise, you will find a suggestion for the application of the detail generating questions as well as a sample modeled revision. Use these as a guide for preparing for modeling with the class.

**CREATIVE CONNECTIONS:**

1.) Research - have students research some of the details - for example, if the general word “flower” is used, have them find several specific examples of flowers. Whatever the topic, students can research for specific detail that will add dimension to the writing.

2.) Art connection - students illustrate some aspect of their revision which includes the visual detail necessary to enhance the piece.
Using Detail-Generating Questions - 1

Read this piece about gardens. The author has simply listed a number of facts. The author did not SHOW us what the garden looked, sounded, and smelled like. On another paper, revise this paragraph using the detail-generating questions below. You may use the sentence starters on the bottom of the page to correct the “broken record” phrases.

- WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?
- WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?
- CAN YOU GIVE A SPECIFIC EXAMPLE?
- IS EACH DETAIL IN A SEPARATE SENTENCE?

Many things grow in a garden. You can grow flowers like roses, sunflowers, and daffodils. You can grow vegetables like tomatoes, beans, corn, carrots, and much more.

Many things grow in a garden. You can grow flowers like roses, sunflowers, and daffodils. (Is each detail in a separate sentence? What does it look like? Why is it important?) You can grow vegetables like tomatoes, beans, corn, carrots, and much more. (Is each detail in a separate sentence? What does it look like? Why is it important?)

You can catch the scent of________. Some gardeners plant________. Colorful_______ can be grown, too.________ are perfect for________.Who wouldn’t enjoy________?
Sample Modeled Revision:

Many things grow in a garden. You can catch the sweet scent of soft pink roses.

These look beautiful in a vase on your table! Tall, bright, yellow sunflowers with black centers can be planted along the back of the garden as a border. Yellow graceful daffodils signal the beginning of spring. Vegetables are grown for food, right in your own backyard! Fat, juicy tomatoes taste great on sandwiches. You can grow beans on vines on tall poles. Fresh corn on the cob grows on tall stalks. Crunchy carrots grow underground. There’s nothing like fresh vegetables on the table right from the garden!
Using Detail-Generating Questions - 2

Read the paragraph below on the topic of training a dog. The author has simply listed a number of facts. None of the facts have been elaborated on in an effective way. On another paper, revise this paragraph by applying the detail-generating questions (in bold print) as indicated. You may use the sentence starters on the bottom of the page to correct the redundant sentence variety.

Your dog will be happier if he is well trained. He needs to come when he is called. He needs to be able to sit and stay. Your dog needs to let you know when he has to go outside. He needs to stay off the furniture. He shouldn’t chew or scratch things.

USE THE DETAIL-GENERATING QUESTIONS:

Your dog will be happier if he is well trained. He needs to come when he is called. (Why is this important?) He needs to be able to sit and stay. (What does that look like? Why is that important?) Your dog needs to let you know when he has to go outside. (What does that look like? Why is that important?) He needs to stay off the furniture and shouldn’t chew or scratch things. (Is each detail in a separate sentence? Can you give a specific example? Why is this important?) Most important, he should know not to bite. (Why is this important?)

SENTENCE STARTERS:

• A well-behaved canine__________ • It is important for your dog to__________
• Safe, happy dogs know__________ • You’ll want to teach__________
• Another critical lesson involves__________ • Be sure to instruct your pet to__________
Sample Modeled Revision:

Your dog will be happier if he is well trained. In order to keep your dog safe from traffic, and to prevent him from chasing other animals and endangering others, he needs to learn how to come when called. At your signal, your furry friend should eagerly sit his wagging tail down and stay put until you tell him otherwise. This prevents the annoyance of your pet jumping up on people or begging at the table. Of course, every well-trained canine needs to learn excellent bathroom manners, barking or standing by the door to signal that he needs to go outside. Your carpet, your floor, and your nose will appreciate this skill! It is important for your dog to stay off the furniture. Nobody likes to sit down on the couch in their black trousers and stand up covered in dog hair! Safe, happy dogs have been taught to chew and scratch on rawhide or rubber toys. This prevents the destruction of shoes, furniture, and other personal items, and also ensures that your dog doesn’t get splinters, or swallow something that will cause injury. Perhaps the most critical lesson to teach your dog is never, ever to bite. In this way, your family, friends, and neighbors will all safely enjoy the companionship of your four-legged canine friend!
Using Detail-Generating Questions - 3

Read the paragraph below on the topic of water recreation. The author has simply listed a number of facts. None of the facts have been elaborated on in an effective way. On another paper, revise this paragraph by applying the detail-generating questions. Also, be sure to include good sentence variety in your revision. Look for and correct redundant word choice.

One of the reasons people enjoy living near the water is the variety of recreational activities water provides. There is motor boating which is fun. There is also sail boating. You can swim, which is fun, waterski, surf, or boogie board. Snorkeling is another fun activity. Waterskiing and using jet skis are more fun water activities.

Some people like to go fishing or clamming.
Sample Modeled Revision*:
* See sample scripted modeling and guided practice lesson of this activity, p. 217 - p. 218.

One of the reasons people enjoy living near the water is the variety of recreational activities water provides. The first thing you might hear is VROOM - that’s the sound of a motorboat revving up for an afternoon of exciting, fast water recreation. Motorboat owners love the thrill of soaring across the waves at high speeds. The wind whips through your hair and against your face. It is positively exhilarating! Sailboats, with their tall, white triangular sails move across the water by wind power. Sailors love the challenge of manipulating the sails in order to best catch the wind. People also love the excitement of sailboat racing! Twenty or so sailboats bob on the water, their white sails standing out against the blue of the waves, each trying to catch the wind and move swiftly ahead of the rest. Those on shore enjoy watching what appear to be small paper boats floating on the open sea! Grab your bathing suit and head for the beach! Not only can you watch the boats, but you can take a refreshing swim. Besides being fun, swimming provides an excellent cardio workout! Where there are powerful waves, there are surfers, enjoying the thrill of balancing on their boards riding the waves. For the less adventurous, there is boogie boarding - grasp that board and let it move you through the water like a dolphin! To learn about life underwater, try snorkeling. Others combine the speed of boating with the thrill of surfing by getting up on water skis! And, if that isn’t enough, seafood lovers might go deep-sea fishing for some tasty swordfish. Along the water’s edge you might catch sight of a clammer preparing for a tasty chowder! There’s definitely something for everyone at the shore!