



Teacher Background: Introduction to Research

In the preceding section of this book, students were introduced to the use of detail generating questions to help them elaborate on their expository and opinion writing. The next step in composing fully elaborated paragraphs is to begin to recognize the use of more powerful kinds of facts, for example, statistics and quotes that enhance the writing. Locating statistics, quotes, and amazing facts requires that the author conduct research, both online and within nonfiction text. From the upper elementary grades onward, students will need to know not only how to find the information they need, but how to translate it into informative, descriptive sentences. They'll be required to support their writing with facts, statistics and quotes taken from a variety of sources, including charts, graphs, diagrams, illustrations, photographs, videos, periodicals and nonfiction text. **In grades two and three our objective is to familiarize students with these “Golden Bricks” and to begin to introduce research skills that will yield a variety of more powerful details.**

In this section, you'll find activities that will help students learn to:

- Refer to diagrams and illustrations to glean descriptive details for their writing and to generate research questions.
- Find specific facts within text (Strategic Reading).
- Read graphs and charts and cull appropriate information from them.
- Recognize quotes and statistics within a finished paragraph.
- Listening for information presented verbally (Close Listening).

These are essential foundational skills that some students may be able to apply independently in writing in the early grades. For those students, academic enrichments are provided. Other students may not be developmentally ready to apply these skills, but benefit by building awareness.



Doing Research and Taking Notes



Objective

Students learn to take notes from research and enhance their expository and opinion writing with additional facts.

Procedure

1. Have the class imagine they're writing a report about snakes. Ask them if they know any facts or information about snakes. Likely, a number of students will offer some facts. Then ask, "Do you think there might be more snake facts to learn?" Discuss the ways and places you might find out more about your topic, and chart their suggestions. The list might include:

- books
- magazines
- zoo
- nature center
- internet
- interview an expert
- listening to a lecture or lesson

Discuss which of these **sources** of information are the most easily accessible. Point out that the internet is a great way for people with access to uncover lots of information.

2. Copy and distribute student reference sheet [Doing Research and Taking Notes](#), p. 277. Review with students.
3. Demonstrate how to do a key word search on the internet to isolate key facts (see [Scripted Sample Lesson](#), p. 280 about internet research) and take notes about them: locate key facts and show students how to write a bullet point followed by a keyword or phrase. Emphasize that note-takers don't copy entire sentences from their sources, just the key bits of information that can later be elaborated on. Time permitting, give the students an opportunity to do a key word search about a topic of their choice or one you have chosen for them.

NOTE: Always prescreen the websites that come up in your search to ensure appropriateness. One way to help filter inappropriate sites is to add the words: for kids after the search term.

4. Now MODEL taking simple bulleted notes from a book. Again, point out the way you focus only on key facts – that writing complete sentences isn't necessary. Find an appropriate nonfiction book from which key facts about your topic can be taken. (Use the example about frogs, p. 278 as a guideline.) Copy and distribute the note-taking sheet, p. 279 and ask students to list any existing knowledge about the topic and write this on the lines provided beneath item 1 on the note-taking sheet. Then, work with students to develop 3 research questions and locate simple answers that you will find when reading the book. Project the note-taking sheet as you read the nonfiction book aloud. When your reading yields answers to any of the questions, fill it in on the note-taking sheet. Remind students that notes need not be in complete sentences. Complete the note-taking sheet by finding a fun fact.

LESSON AT A GLANCE:

Whole Class and Small Group or Independent Activity

- *Discuss the reasons we need to research.*
- *MODEL taking notes from a book and a website.*
- *Elaborate simple sentences with facts taken from research.*



Doing Research and Taking Notes

5. Project your finished note-taking sheet as you MODEL writing a simple sentence using the detail generating question What does it look like and the information from the note-taking sheet, such as (using the example about frogs):

Frogs have strong back legs.

6. Now, use the detail-generating question, “Why is that important?” as well as the information provided on the note-taking sheet to extend that sentence.

Frogs have strong back legs that allow them to hop up and to catch the flying insects that they eat.

7. Elicit student participation to generate several more sentences from the information on the note-taking sheet and the detail-generating questions, such as:

Frogs have strong back legs that allow them to hop up and catch the flying insects that they eat.

Green or brown in color, frogs are often hard to spot in their pond, river or desert environment which helps them hide from the birds and snakes who prey on them.

It might be hard to believe, but even the loudest croaking bullfrog started its life as a tiny black tadpole.

Academic Enrichment:

Using the note-taking sheet, p. 279 have students research a topic of their choice by:

1. Retrieving their existing knowledge of the topic.
2. Developing research questions to help them learn more about the topic.
3. Conducting research to find answers to those questions.
4. Taking notes from the research.
5. Translating those notes into fully elaborated sentences.



Name: _____

NOTE TAKING SHEET

Write down everything you already know about this topic. (Leave blank if you can't think of anything.) Then, think of three questions that you have about this topic. Use books or the internet to learn more about this topic and find answers to your questions.

Topic: _____

1. What do you already know about this topic? _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. Bonus: Can you find one fun or surprising fact about your topic?
