

TEACHING NAPLAN^{*}-type Writing Skills

~ Narratives and Persuasive Essays ~



Book 1

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Contents

Foreword	4		
The Structure of Narratives 1		Audience in Narratives 1	
Teachers' Notes	5	Teachers' Notes	33
Activity 1	6	Activity 15	34
The Structure of Narratives 2		Audience in Narratives 2	
Teachers' Notes	7	Teachers' Notes	35
Activity 2	8	Activity 16	36
The Structure of Narratives 3		Audience in Narratives 3	
Teachers' Notes	9	Teachers' Notes	37
Activity 3	10	Activity 17	38
The Structure of Narratives 4		Audience in Persuasive Essays 1 and 2	
Teachers' Notes	11-12	Teachers' Notes	39
Activity 4	13	Activity 18	40
The Structure of Narratives 5		Activity 19	41
Teachers' Notes	14	Ideas in Narratives 1 and 2	
Activity 5	15	Teachers' Notes	42-43
The Structure of Persuasive Essays 1,2 and 3		Activity 20	44
Teachers' Notes	16	Activity 21	45
Activity 6	17	Ideas in Narratives 3	
Activity 7	18	Teachers' Notes	46
Activity 8	19	Activity 22	47
Teachers' Notes on Sentence Structure	20	Ideas in Persuasive Essays	
Sentence Structure 1		Teachers' Notes	48
Teachers' Notes	21	Activity 23	49
Activity 9	22	Punctuation 1	
Sentence Structure 2		Teachers' Notes	50
Teachers' Notes	23	Activity 24	51
Activity 10	24	Punctuation 2	
Sentence Structure 3		Teachers' Notes	52
Teachers' Notes	25	Activity 25	53
Activity 11a	26	Punctuation 3	
Activity 11b	27	Teachers' Notes	54
Sentence Structure 4 and 5		Activity 26a	55
Teachers' Notes	28	Activity 26b	56
Activity 12	29	Narrative Marking Sheet	57
Activity 13	30	Persuasive Essay Marking Sheet	58
Sentence Structure 6,7 and 8		Class Record Sheet - Narrative	59
Teachers' Notes	31	Class Record Sheet - Persuasive	60
Activity 14	32		

Here are two pieces of writing that were written by children in Year Three. Only one of them was given a high mark for Text Structure. The other got a low mark because it is not a narrative. Read them both then answer the questions below.

The Knockout Wave – by Jason

Once there was a boy named Jock who loved surfing. One day he attempted to surf on a huge wave that was curled over at the top like a bully's fist. The wave knocked him off the surfboard and he was swept swiftly out to sea where there was no-one. Jock had to struggle hard to stop from drowning and soon he was getting very tired.

Two hours later he couldn't swim any more. Just then he heard a motor boat coming near but when he tried to hold up his arms he was too weak and he was sure the men in the boat would not see him.

Just then one of the lifeguards did see him and they took him to the beach where they revived him and asked him his name. The doctor said that Jock was fortunate to be alive.

Jock got back to his family and he never tried to surf on a knockout wave again.

A Scary Thing – by Amy

The door flew open and there stood the scary thing. It had the red eyes of a monster and green squishy hair that looked like seaweed. The nose was all crooked and covered in warts. Its neck was as thick as its head but the arms were skinny, like on a stick man.

The legs were bandy and bent and the awful thing, whatever it was, smelt like compost. I slammed the door and ran to my room.

1. Who do you think received the better mark for Text Structure, Amy or Jason?

2. Give a reason for your answer. _____

3. Write down three good words that Amy has used.

4. What words did Jason use instead of ... big?

tried?

lucky?

5. Use the back of this sheet to add a middle and an end to Amy's description, to help her get a good mark for Text Structure.

The Structure of Narratives 5

ACTIVITY 5

- Below is a short piece of writing. Two paragraphs have been joined into one. It is your job to separate them again. You can draw a red line between the two paragraphs, or you can cut them out and glue them onto a blank piece of paper, leaving a gap between them.

The old women, more than sixty of them, were beginning to screech and jump off their seats as though sticks were being stuck into their bottoms. A few of them jumped up on to their chairs, others were standing on the tables and all of them were wiggling about and moving their heads in an extraordinary way. Then all at once, they became silent. Then they froze. Every old lady stood as stiff and quiet as a corpse. The whole room became hauntingly still.

- Which words that the writer has used mean nearly the same as the ones below?

starting

chairs

shaking

unusual

carcass

- The writer uses two similes that help the readers get a clear picture of the scene in their minds. Try to replace the similes that he used with two of your own.

SIMILE 1

... screech and jump off their seats *as though sticks were being stuck into their bottoms*.

... screech and jump off their seats as though

SIMILE 2

Every old lady stood *as stiff and quiet as a corpse*.

Every old lady stood as stiff and quiet

A sentence is a group of words that are arranged to express ideas. Look at the two sentences below. They each have one idea.

My dog is black.

My dog has a short tail.

Often we can put two ideas together into one sentence by using a joining word. Look at the example below.

My dog is black and has a short tail.

The joining word is **and**. Notice that we only had to use the words **my dog** once.

Read the sentences below. They have two ideas and use joining words. Put a ring around the joining words in these sentences and then write the two ideas as separate sentences. The first one has been done for you.

1. I bought a chocolate and an ice cream.

I bought a chocolate.

I bought an ice cream.

2. My Dad likes tennis and golf.

My Dad likes _____.

My Dad likes _____.

3. I have a brother but no sisters.

I have a _____.

I have no _____.

4. I was very tired so I went to bed.

I was _____.

I went _____.

5. Jack will come on Saturday and Jane will come on Sunday.

Jack will _____.

Jane will _____.

Sentence Structure 4



Some sentences can be very long and have lots of ideas in them. Others can be short and have only one or two ideas. Good writing must contain a mixture of long and short sentences. If all of the sentences are short the writing will sound boring.

Read the paragraph below out loud. It is made up of 13 short sentences and sounds awkward.

The alarm clock woke me up. I stretched. I yawned. I stood up. I listened. I could hear nothing. I opened the door. I walked quietly to the kitchen. I had a drink of water. I waited. Everyone was asleep. I went back to bed. I read my book.

Now read this paragraph aloud and hear the difference.

When the alarm clock woke me up I stretched and yawned. I listened but I could hear nothing. I opened the door, walked quietly to the kitchen and had a drink of water. Then I waited. Everyone was asleep, so I went back to bed and read my book.

The second paragraph is made up of: three sentences with three ideas; one sentence with two ideas and one sentence with one idea.

1. Put a red ring around the sentence that has one idea.
2. Put a blue ring around the sentence that has two ideas.
3. Put a yellow ring around the three sentences that have three ideas.
4. Below are two ideas. Join them to create ONE sentence that contains both ideas. You will only need to write *Tom bought* once and add the word *and*.

Tom bought an ice cream.

Tom bought a chocolate.

5. Below are four ideas. Can you join them together into ONE sentence?

she bent down

and picked me up

with one hand.

Very slowly

Clues:

The writer is a mouse. The first idea starts with a capital letter. The last idea ends with a full stop.

Audience in Narratives 2

1. Before the children start working on the activity, read the passage aloud to the class, without the markers being included. They will notice that it reads reasonably well but that the sequence of events is a little disjointed. When the exercise is finished read both versions aloud, first without the markers and then with them.

Here is a possible answer to the activity using the markers provided:

One summer holiday two children named Jodie and Harry decided to visit their auntie's house. When they arrived no-one was at home so they went around to the back door and found a way into the house by using the key that Auntie Jane always left under a flower pot.

Inside the house everything was dark. The curtains were drawn and the lights were all turned off. Harry was groping around the walls, searching for a switch, when all of a sudden he heard a low moaning sound. "What was that?" said Jodie. "I don't know," Harry replied. "I think this place must be haunted."

Without waiting another second Jodie and Harry ran out of the house. They sat on the lawn and waited.

Two hours later Auntie Jane came home. When the children told her what had happened she laughed. "Don't worry. I have a new puppy and I locked her in the spare room. Would you like to see her?"

Extension Activities

1. Tell the students that to make sure a reader can follow their writing, they must use the same tense throughout their entire story. Changing tenses will confuse a reader.
2. Point out to the students that the narrative on the activity page is written in the past tense. This tells the reader that the action has already happened. This is because the verbs are all in the past tense:

decided to they went found a way she said

Tell the children that the story could be changed to the present tense, by changing the verbs listed above to:

decide to they find a way she says

3. Read the passage aloud after the changes have been made and discuss the differences between past and present tense.

Note: Markers of NAPLAN writing will consider it to be a Cohesion error if children change the tense over the course of their narrative or essay and an error in Sentence Structure if they change the tense within a sentence. It is vital that a piece of writing remains in either the past or present tense throughout.*

4. Ask the children to give you the past tense for the following present tense verbs:

buy (bought)	bite (bit)	choose (chose)	catch (caught)
bleed (bled)	come (came)	fall (fell)	creep (crept)
dig (dug)	drink (drank)	grow (grew)	give (gave)
eat (ate)	fly (flew)	drive (drove)	know (knew)
lose (lost)	pay (paid)	lend (lent)	dream (dreamt)

Audience in Persuasive Essays 1



The language that you use in a persuasive essay needs to be quite formal. That is to say there must be a distance between the writer and the reader. The writer cannot use slang, be familiar (over-friendly), or swear. You must use a *written register* and not a *spoken register*. Look at the examples below.

Spoken register: Gee mate, I thought I was gonna fall flat on me kisser.

Written register: I thought I was going to fall on my face.

Spoken register: I reckon it's wrong to stop kids riding skateboards at school.

Written register: I believe that children should be allowed to ride skateboards at school.

Rewrite each of the sentences below so that they are in the written register.

i. It's crazy to make kids wear a hat on the oval.

ii. You'll get busted by the cops if you ride your bike without a crash helmet.

iii. The old bloke who lives next door kept my cricket bat when I slogged it over the fence.

iv. The crook was spotted by the cops when they searched for him in a chopper.

v. My old man says that people who chuck rocks on the roof oughta be locked up.

vi. That skinny chic is my mate's sister.

vii. My folks will lose it if I shoot through without doin me chores first

2. A class was asked to write a persuasive essay responding to the statement, "Good fences make good neighbours." (The statement is a line from a poem by the American poet, Robert Frost.) A boy named Ashley wrote an essay agreeing with the statement. Read the opening two paragraphs of his essay on the next page. You will see that while most aspects of his writing are quite good, Ashley would get poor marks for Audience because he tends to use a spoken register. Your task is to rewrite the paragraphs using the written register on the back of this sheet or on a separate sheet of paper.

Ideas in Persuasive Essays

1. The aim of this activity is to teach the students the difference between a sweeping (wild) assertion and a reasoned argument. An assertion is a declaration or statement of opinion that is not supported by evidence, or logical reason. The use of assertion will raise questions in the mind of the intelligent reader and will weaken the writer's ability to persuade.

Here are some suggested re-writes of the statements in exercise 1:

- **Research has shown that eating too many sugary foods, like chocolate cake, can harm your teeth.** (The statement is supported by evidence and says *can harm* not *will harm*.)
- **Some people believe that watching too much television can be harmful to the eyes.** (Removes the unreasonable claim of square eyes and says *some people believe* instead of stating that it is an established and proven fact.)
- **It has been proven that eyesight weakens with age and so older people should have their eyes tested regularly if they wish to drive a vehicle.** (Supported by evidence and uses the milder modality *should*.)
- **There is no evidence to support the claim that women have poorer peripheral vision than men.**

2. Here are the correct responses to the statements in exercise 2:

- i. Some animals should be kept in cages. X
- ii. Homework should not be allowed. X
- iii. Many cheap toys are a waste of money because they are easily broken. ✓
- iv. Kids must have fun now because they won't have fun when they're grown up. (✓)
- v. Teachers who set homework have no idea what it's like to be a child. X
- vi. More than half of the teenagers in Australia are on the dole. X
- vii. Outdoor sports are good for you because you are breathing fresh air and getting lots of healthy exercise. ✓
- viii. Mobile phones are responsible for many deaths. X
- ix. Some pets, like budgies or canaries, need to be kept in cages to protect them from predators like cats and hawks. ✓
- x. Television advertisements make children want things that they don't really need. X
- xi. Children need to learn how to socialise and so it is important that they have time to play games with their friends. ✓
- xii. Most parents buy toys for their kids so that they won't chuck saddies in public. (✓)

Statements that offer no reasons for the stated opinions are numbers 1, 2, 5, 6, 8 and 10.

Reasonable arguments are presented in numbers 3, 7, 9 and 11.

The use of the words *because* and *so that* in statements 4 and 12 indicate that the writer has tried to give a reason for the opinions stated in the main clauses of their sentences. However the reasons stated are wild assertions. Statement 4 asserts that adults never have fun and statement 12 claims that most parents buy toys for their children simply to avoid public tantrums.

Note the use of vernacular (spoken register) in number 12. Encourage the children to re-write this statement in formal language. Identify *chuck* and *saddies* as slang expressions and replace these two words.

It is also important that the ideas (arguments) in a persuasive essay are relevant to the topic statement (the prompt) and are also related to each other.

Punctuation 3

Activity 26a

Answer to question 1:

Young Suzie climbed up on to the chair. She picked up her knife and fork and said,
"Let's eat, Grandpa."

Answer to question 2:

My father is interested in cooking, dogs and famous soldiers.

Activity 26b

Answer to question 1:

I fell asleep at the wheel. After driving for forty years it was my first accident.

Answer to question 2(i):

The simile is: as sturdy as a rock.

Answer to question 2(ii):

Words that indicate the dinghy was well built are: sturdy strong reliable.

Answer to question 2(iii):

The literary device used is personification.

Sample

NARRATIVE

[illegible]

Sample

Categories that need revision: _____