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Refer to pages 6 and 7 to introduce or review the writing trait.

DAY 1

Read and discuss the skill statement at the top of the page. Say: *One way to ensure your topic is compelling is to make it more specific. Specific topics are usually more interesting to read than vague, general ones. Writing about a specific topic is easier, too, because it helps you focus and develop your ideas.* Then guide students through the activities.


- **Activity A:** Have students read the paragraphs. Then ask: *Why is the second paragraph stronger? (It is more specific and interesting.) Say: The second writer narrowed his topic before he began writing. He may have used a narrowing triangle to help him.* Draw an upside-down triangle on the board. Write **Roberts Orchard** at the top of the triangle, **orchard store** in the middle, and **apple cider** at the bottom. Say: *Using the triangle, write a sentence that explains how the second paragraph is more specific than the first.* Have students complete the activity.
- **Activity B (Convention):** Say: *Use possessive nouns to show ownership.* Write **the orchard's apples** and **the apples' skins** on the board. Say: *Adding an apostrophe and s to the singular noun orchard makes it possessive. Adding an apostrophe after the s in the plural noun apples makes it possessive. Remember, apostrophes should only be used in contractions and possessives.* Have students circle each possessive noun in the paragraphs.

DAY 2

Read and discuss the skill statement at the top of the page. Then guide students through the activities.

- **Activity A:** Say: *Read the paragraph.* Then ask: *Which sentence is the topic sentence? (the first sentence) Why does it need to be revised? (It is difficult to determine whom the paragraph is about.)* Have students complete the activity, and invite volunteers to share their new sentences.
- **Activity B:** Have students complete the activity and share their topic sentences. Ask students to explain why their topic sentences are effective.
- **Activity C (Convention):** Have students complete the activity. Then ask students to write their sentences on the board to check for proper punctuation of possessive nouns.

Name: _____ **Week 1 • Day 1**

 **Ideas** The best writing begins with a clear and compelling topic. Make sure your topic is specific.

A. Read these descriptive paragraphs. The writers started with a similar topic, but made different choices. Write a sentence that explains how the second paragraph is more specific than the first.

Roberts Orchard

Roberts Orchard is a large orchard that grows eight varieties of apples, as well as pumpkins and gourds. The parking lot is full every day in the fall. Visitors pick their own apples and pumpkins from the fields, or select some that are for sale in the orchard's store. The orchard covers several acres, so a tractor pulling a wagon carries apple and pumpkin pickers to the farthest fields. The orchard's store is not just a little shack by the roadside. It's an adventure for the senses, thanks to the samples and scents. Many items made from the orchard's fruits are for sale. Pies, cakes, and ciders are just a few of the delicacies on the store's shelves.

Roberts Orchard Apple Cider


Did you know that you can taste autumn? All you have to do is pour a glass of Roberts Orchard's fresh apple cider. The first thing you'll notice is the full and tangy aroma rising from the amber liquid. Take a moment to enjoy the juice's unique scent. Then take a sip. You'll swear you taste fall, if fall had a taste. You tongue's taste buds will be surrounded by liquid apple pie, with a hint of red and orange leaves. Nutmeg, cinnamon, and allspice remind you of a crackling fire and a warm, plentiful Thanksgiving Roberts' apple cider is more than squashed apples. It's a season in a glass.

The second paragraph is more specific than the first because it only describes one thing: the experience of drinking Roberts Orchard's apple cider from the orchard store.

B. Circle each possessive noun in both paragraphs.

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Name: _____ **Week 1 • Day 2**

 **Ideas** An effective topic sentence clearly states the main idea of the paragraph and encourages readers to keep reading.

A. Read this first paragraph from a biography. Then rewrite the underlined sentence to make the topic clearer.

Shirley Ann Jackson: Academic Pioneer

There have been many important female scientists, such as Marie Curie and Jane Goodall, but only one was named "the ultimate role model for women in science" by Time magazine, and that was Shirley Ann Jackson. She was a particle physicist before becoming the president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Born in Washington, D.C., to parents who strongly believed in education, she started her illustrious academic career as valedictorian of her high school senior class.

Sample Answer:
While there have been many important female scientists, only Shirley Ann Jackson was named "the ultimate role model for women in science" by Time magazine.

B. The topic sentence is missing from this short news article. Write a topic sentence that clearly states its main idea.

Ancient Plant Given New Life


A few years ago, scientists dug up frozen burrows belonging to ground squirrels in Siberia and found hordes of seeds and nuts. Kept cold by permafrost and natural antifreeze properties of the plant, scientists were able to grow a plant from its seeds in 2012. Thought to have died out 32,000 years ago, the narrow-leaved campion is the oldest plant ever grown from ancient seeds.

Sample Answer:
The narrow-leaved campion, an arctic flower that died out 32,000 years ago, was revived by scientists in 2012.

C. Write a sentence using a singular possessive noun and a plural possessive noun from one of the paragraphs above. **Sample Answer:**
The scientists' success was made possible by the plant's capabilities.

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Name: _____ **Week 1 • Day 3**

 **Ideas** Be sure your topic and ideas fit your purpose and intended audience and create interest for both you and your readers.

A. Read the blog entry below. Then:

- Determine the writer's purpose and write it on the lines below.
- Cross out any sentences that do not achieve the writer's purpose.
- Add apostrophes to the possessive nouns.

Francis Lewis Middle School Blog

The Chicago Art Museum's "Faces of Famine" Exhibit
posted on September 24, 2013
 by Kara P. Nelson, 8th grade

The Chicago Art Museum's "Faces of Famine" exhibit will make you think differently about the food you eat. ~~It costs \$4 to get in.~~ My art class went to the exhibit today. I'm not even sure how to describe what I felt.

The photographs show kids from African countries that are experiencing famine, such as Sudan, Malawi, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya. Labels next to the photos stated the subjects' ages. ~~The labels were hard to read.~~ Kids who were 13 years old looked like they were only 6 years old. Their ribs stuck out and their stomachs were distended. But their eyes were wide and looked at you intensely. ~~There was a photo of the photographer as well. I wonder how she became a photographer in Africa.~~

All of us were quiet at lunch, even though the cafeteria served that awesome basil pizza. I think everyone who saw those photographs thinks about food differently now. It's hard to imagine being hungry for days, much less longer.

After school, I went to the principal's office to talk to her. ~~Her office is pretty far from the cafeteria.~~ I asked if we could help famine victims for our school's service project. She said "yes," as long as I helped to direct the project.

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Sample Answer:
The writer wanted to share her experience of viewing the photographs and how it motivated her to act.

B. Write several ideas that the writer could have included to communicate a stronger purpose. What might her audience want to know? **Sample Answers:**
a photo from the exhibit, a description of her service project, practical ideas of how students can contribute, map to museum, map of African countries affected by famine


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DAY 3

Read and discuss the skill statement at the top of the page. Say: *When choosing a topic to write about, it is important to remember your audience. Be sure to write about something your audience is interested in.* Then ask: *Why is it important to write about what you are interested in?* (Your interest shows in your writing.) Then guide students through the activities.

- **Activity A (Convention):** Have students read the blog entry. Ask: *Who is the audience of this entry?* (readers of the blog, friends) *What is the purpose of her blog?* Have students write their answers in the space provided. Ask: *Do all of the ideas in the entry achieve that purpose?* (no) *Why shouldn't those ideas be included?* (They distract from the purpose.) Have students complete the activity. Review the answers as a class.
- **Activity B:** Discuss nontextual items that students have seen in blogs (e.g., lists, maps, videos, photos, illustrations). Say: *Think about textual and nontextual information the writer could include to communicate her purpose and also interest the audience.* Have students complete the activity.

Name: _____ **Week 1 • Day 4**

 **Ideas** Be sure that your topic is interesting, specific, and appropriate for your audience and purpose.

A. Plan a blog entry about a problem or issue that is important to you. Use the narrowing triangle to make your topic specific.

Topic

1. a problem or issue that is important to me
2. the city's budget problems
3. closing the public library
4. what no library would mean to the city

Sample Answers:

B. Decide on your audience and purpose for writing the blog entry. Then list textual and nontextual ideas that will help you achieve your purpose for writing.

Audience: my friends and classmates

Purpose: to persuade them to protest against the library closing

Ideas: why the council wants to close the library, no place to read books and listen to music for free, no place for after-school homework help, no meeting space for the city's clubs, only free place to use computers, librarians would lose their jobs, photos of library, photos of kids at library, time and place of next city council meeting

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DAY 4

Read and discuss the skill statement at the top of the page. Ask: *Why is this rule important when writing a blog entry?* (To interest readers, a blog entry must be specific and appropriate.) Then guide students through the activities.

- **Activity A:** Say: *With a partner, brainstorm your ideas for blog entries. Then choose one and use the narrowing triangle to make it more specific. Share your ideas with your partner.*
- **Activity B:** Have students complete the activity. Ask them to share and discuss their ideas in small groups.

DAY 5 Writing Prompt 

- Use your ideas from Day 4 to write a blog entry about a specific topic that is interesting and important to both you and your audience.
- Be sure to properly punctuate possessive nouns.



The best writing begins with a clear and compelling topic.
Make sure your topic is specific.

- A. Read these descriptive paragraphs. The writers started with a similar topic, but made different choices. Write a sentence that explains how the second paragraph is more specific than the first.

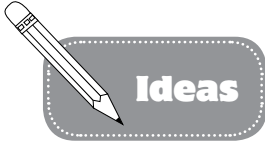
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- B. Circle each possessive noun in both paragraphs.



An effective topic sentence clearly states the main idea of the paragraph and encourages readers to keep reading.

- A. Read this first paragraph from a biography. Then rewrite the underlined sentence to make the topic clearer.

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- C. Write a sentence using a singular possessive noun and a plural possessive noun from one of the paragraphs above.



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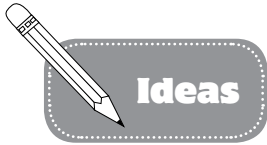
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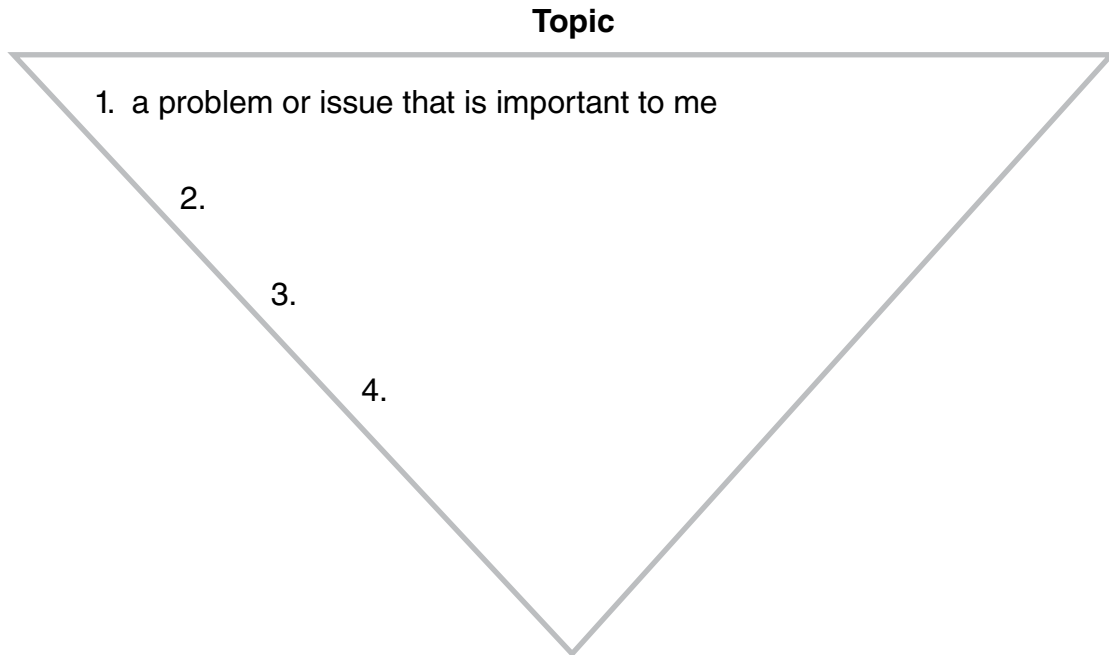
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B. Write several ideas that the writer could have included to communicate a stronger purpose. What might her audience want to know?



Be sure that your topic is interesting, specific, and appropriate for your audience and purpose.

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- B. Decide on your audience and purpose for writing the blog entry. Then list textual and nontextual ideas that will help you achieve your purpose for writing.

Audience: _____

Purpose: _____

Ideas: _____
