

PLACING STUDENTS INTO THE PROGRAM

Students should begin this unit by writing a letter in response to a prompt. This writing sample can be used as the placement test as well as the pretest. You score the samples with a rubric (provided for each form of writing) that considers the following elements: organization, content, style, and mechanics.

A perfect score is 100 points. If your students score 20-95 points, they have the necessary preskills to participate in the unit.

Guidelines for placement:

- 0-19 points: The student may not function well at the level tested. If, because of class organization, the student must be placed in this level they will require accommodation and assistance.
- 20-95 points: The student is properly placed and will benefit from instruction at the level tested.
- 96-100 points: The student may have skills exceeding those taught at the level tested. If, because of class organization, the student must be placed in this level, they can still benefit from participation in this level of the program. Additional challenges can be added by making adjustments on the rubric for what is required of this student. For example, if the rubric requires students to use a positive comment to open the letter, the higher performing students can be required to make more than one comment.

After students have completed the placement test and you know they are appropriately placed, you are ready to begin the lessons.

Note to Teachers:

There are several standard business letter formats. You may wish to adjust certain elements of business letter writing to conform to your state standards (for example, writing the date at the top of the letter instead of after the heading, or including the writer's optional email address as part of the heading instead of after the printed name at the bottom of the letter).

GETTING READY TO START

Note: The pretest should be used to determine if your students are working at the Advanced Level of Letter Writing. A pretest should be administered and scored before you introduce this unit.

Introducing Letter Writing

(Explain what the class will be doing during this Letter Writing unit:) **We are going to have fun together as you learn to be authors. Sometimes authors work with others to produce a piece of writing. This kind of writing is called a collaborative writing project. The people who work together enjoy sharing their ideas.**

Sometimes we will work as a collaborative group to write a letter. When we write as a group, I will record our ideas on chart paper or type them on the Smart Board. Everyone will contribute ideas to the class letter. (Note: Writing can be word processed using a computer and a Smart Board.)

Sometimes authors work individually. After we work collaboratively, you will produce a letter of your own.

For the next several lessons, you will be learning about business letter writing. When we write letters, we are exchanging a handwritten or printed communication with another person or group of people. You will be learning about writing two specific kinds of business letters: application letters and complaint letters.

OBTAINING A BEGINNING WRITING SAMPLE—PRETEST

Administering the Pretest

PREPARATION: Display the following writing prompt on an overhead projector, the board, or on a Smart Board:

Sometimes when you buy a product there is something wrong with it. If this happens, you want the company who made it to fix it so that you will be completely satisfied.

Write a complaint letter to the customer service manager of an online store explaining what is wrong with a pair of shoes you bought online and what might be done to correct the problem.

Explain to students that before they start the Letter Writing unit, you would like to collect a sample of their writing. Mention that you will save this sample so you and they can see how their writing develops as they learn more about writing business letters.

Read aloud the prompt to students. Ask them to write their complaint letter on lined paper or word process it. Allow them sufficient time to write. Ask students to edit, proofread, and write or word process a final copy of the letter. Use the rubric and scoring guide found on the following page to evaluate each student's writing. Staple the rubric to each student's piece of writing. Keep the writing sample and the scoring rubric for comparison at the end of the unit.)

Scoring the Pretest

(For each element:
Give a score of 0 if there is no evidence of the element.
Give a score of 1 for each element at the emerging level.
Give a score of 2-3 for each element at the basic level.
Give a score of 4 for each element at the proficient level based on the state curriculum or Common Core State Standards.
Give a score of 5 for each element at the advanced level.
Total the scores for each individual element. Place students according to the guidelines for placement found on page 10.)

Name _____ Date _____

RUBRIC

Pretest

Posttest

Scoring the Sample

- Give a score of 0 if there is no evidence of the element.
- Give a score of 1 for each element at the emerging level.
- Give a score of 2-3 for each element at the basic level.
- Give a score of 4 for each element at proficient level.
- Give a score of 5 for each element at the advanced level.

Evaluating the Elements of a Complaint Letter	
The author of this complaint letter...	Points Earned
Organization	
Includes a heading (writer's complete address). Includes the date.	
Includes an inside address (recipient's title, name, and complete address).	
Writes a Re: line above an appropriate salutation.	
Concludes the complaint letter with an appropriate closing and a signature.	
Writes an email address below a correctly printed/typed signature.	
Content	
Opens the letter with a positive comment.	
Writes a clear and concise statement of the complaint.	
Presents specific and well-supported reasons, facts, and examples.	
Makes logical and appropriate suggestions to address the complaint.	
Expresses appreciation for the reader's attention to the problem.	
Style	
Uses a variety of sentence structures (simple, compound, complex).	
Uses formal language; no contractions or slang.	
Uses precise vocabulary.	
Establishes a clear focus with little or no irrelevant or repetitious information.	
Uses nonconfrontational language that compels the reader to act.	
Mechanics	
Uses the block format for letter writing (no indentation).	
Uses correct punctuation.	
Uses correct capitalization.	
Uses conventional spelling at a developmentally appropriate level.	
Uses standard English usage (grammar).	
Total Points	