

Grade 8 Playlist: Develop the Topic

Aligns with *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2.B*:

- Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

Welcome

Staring at a blank sheet of paper and preparing to write an informative/explanatory essay can be intimidating. Fortunately, there are strategies to help get the ideas lined up and ready to flow. Finding and choosing good, relevant facts is an important part of the process. Then comes careful and thoughtful organization—including strong topic sentences to begin paragraphs with interesting supporting details—to guide readers so they can follow, understand, and enjoy the essay.

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn to:

- choose good, relevant facts.
- brainstorm relevant information for informative/explanatory writing.
- organize supporting details for a well-organized paragraph.
- craft a well-organized paragraph with strong topic sentences and supporting details.

Review

Key Terms

- A **topic sentence** is the first sentence in a paragraph. It tells the reader what the paragraph will be about.
- A **relevant fact** is information that relates *directly* to the topic.
- **Supporting details** are facts, details, and other information that support the topic sentence and help develop the topic overall.
- A **concluding sentence** is the last sentence in a paragraph. It summarizes the main idea of the paragraph.



Exploring the Standard

When writing an informative/explanatory essay, the goal is to develop the topic in a way the reader can follow and understand easily. The writer wants to clearly introduce what the essay is about, write a topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph to share the main ideas, then add relevant details to support the main ideas. Effective topic sentences give readers a clear point of reference so they know what is in the paragraph. Good supporting details expand on the main idea of the topic sentence. A good closing sentence reinforces the paragraph's main idea while adding a little something new.

A Closer Look: Researching and Brainstorming

When starting an informative/explanatory essay, a common slip-up for writers is to start drafting before they have a good understanding of the topic. A better approach is to start by reading, researching, and jotting down notes. These notes can include facts, examples, quotations, and other details. Doing this with two or three sources provides the "ingredients" for a good essay.

With notes in hand, it is time for brainstorming. It involves sorting through the sources to pick out which details will help develop the topic. The most helpful details can be written out in a list called a **scratch outline** or be marked with a highlighter. These details do not need to be in order at this point, they just need to be easy to find.

The last step before writing is to organize the ideas. An outline is one way to do this; a **bubble map** is another. In a bubble map, the topic for each paragraph is written into the center bubble; this gives the main idea for the topic sentence of the paragraph. Then supporting details are inserted in the surrounding bubbles. Every supporting detail should add new information about the main idea in the topic sentence.

Here is a four-step process for developing a topic effectively and with confidence:

1. Read, research, and take notes from two or three sources. Understand the topic before trying to explain it to others in writing.
2. Create a scratch outline, listing or marking all the relevant information, facts, and details that will help develop the topic.
3. Use the information and details from the scratch outline to fill in a bubble map for each paragraph.
4. Use the bubble map to build the paragraph. The bubble map helps to ensure that the writer included a topic sentence that is supported by two to three details.
5. Write the paragraph. Make sure to add a concluding sentence.

