



The Minnesota Literacy Council created this curriculum. We invite you to adapt it for your own classrooms.

Advanced Level (CASAS reading scores of 221-235)

The Short Essay: Week 1

Unit Overview

This is a 6-week unit in which learners produce a variety of genres of short essays. Advanced learners transition from paragraph writing to short essay writing. Learners explore unity and coherence in a paragraph and choosing controlled topic sentences. Learners also explore different grammatical points per essay genre. Learners work on avoiding run-on sentences and creating compound sentences with proper conjunctions.

Focus of Week 1

- Identifying the **elements of a paragraph**
- **Unity and coherence** in a paragraph
- Identifying and writing a topic sentence with a **controlling idea**
- Short essay **organization**
- Avoiding **run-on sentences**
- The various functions of **dependent clauses**

Short Essay Unit: Week 1, Monday

Objectives <i>Learners will be able to...</i>	Materials
<p>Literacy: identify characteristics of a paragraph and identify topic sentences with controlling ideas.</p> <p>Listening/speaking: listen to a paragraph and identify the topic sentence as well as how many clauses they hear within the topic sentence (discrete listening).</p> <p>Transitions & Critical Thinking: distinguish between a general topic and a topic sentence with a controlling idea.</p> <p>Grammar: Identify simple vs. compound sentences.</p>	<p>Make Student Copies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: <i>Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay</i>, pp. 2-5, 20-21 <p>Make Single Copies or Reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handout: The Coconut Tree Script (Teacher copy only) <p>Props, Technology, or Other Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A projector

Lesson Plan

Warm up: Discussion of Quotes

Description: Read quotes by Paulo Coelho and Joan Didion. Compare and contrast their perspectives on why people write. Brainstorm as a class why individuals might write in their daily lives.

Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, Top of p. 2

Activity 1: Literacy & Transitions/Critical Thinking

Description: Identify characteristics of a paragraph after reviewing the basic structure and format.

Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, pp. 2-3 and a projector

Activity 2: Literacy & Transitions/Critical Thinking

Description: Introduce “topic sentence” and practice identifying the topic sentence of a paragraph.

Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, p. 5 and a projector

Activity 3: Grammar

Description: Read about simple and compound sentences and complete an identifying clauses exercise.

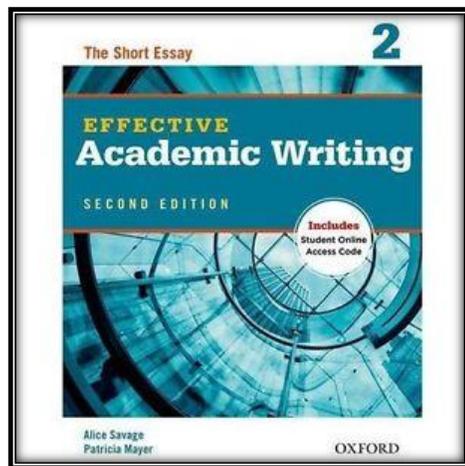
Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, pp. 20-21 (Exercise 1 only on p. 21)

Checking for Understanding

Description: Listen to find topic sentence and identify number of clauses. Listen for number of supporting sentences and whether or not there is a concluding sentence.

Materials/Prep: Handout: **The Coconut Tree Script (Teacher copy only)**

Teacher Directions: Warm Up: Why do people write?-Materials: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay, p. 2*



Step 1: Setting the Context

In this unit, advanced learners will be learning about paragraph structure and development as well as the creation of the short essay. To introduce the topic, learners explore a variety of reasons and motivations for writing.

Pair up learners or work in small groups of no more than 4. Distribute the textbook p. 2 “The Paragraph” containing two author quotes and questions A and B. Discuss the quotes as a whole class before asking pairs/groups to address questions A and B.

Step 2: Group Work

Pairs/groups take approximately 10 minutes, no more, to discuss the following:

1. Do you share the writers’ feelings in any way? Do you agree more with Coelho or Didion?
2. Why do you usually write? Why might you or your family members need to write in the future?

Step 3: Report Out

Pairs/groups share their responses to the questions with the whole class.

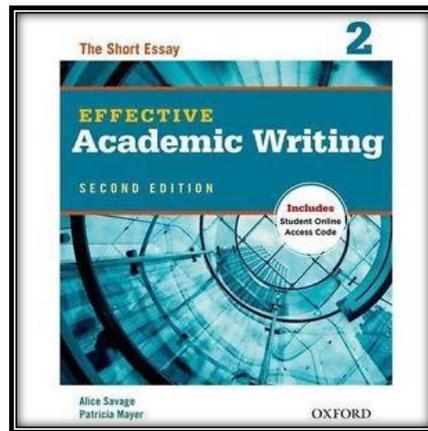
Notes about the authors quoted:

Paulo Coelho was born in 1947 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. At age 16, his parents committed him to a mental institution for being extremely introverted and different from his peers. He escaped three times. He didn’t hold it against his parents, but understood they wanted to “help” him. *The Alchemist*, his most famous book, has been translated into 80 languages. He has been presented with multiple international awards.

Joan Didion was born in 1934 in Sacramento, CA. She has written twice as many non-fiction books and essays as fiction. On July, 3, 2013, President Obama presented Didion with one of the National medals of Arts and Humanities.

Information from:
www.biography.com

Teacher Directions: Activity 1: Literacy/Transitions & Critical Thinking-Materials:
Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay, pp. 2-3; and a projector



Step 1: Context

Paragraphs have a certain format, or look, if they are written properly. A student paragraph, or a paragraph within an essay, should be indented; however, not all paragraphs are indented. Some paragraphs are in a block style (e.g. news articles, business letters, etc.) Learners should keep in mind that the information provided about formatting a paragraph on p. 2 of *Effective Academic Writing 2*, is referring to the format of an essay's paragraph.

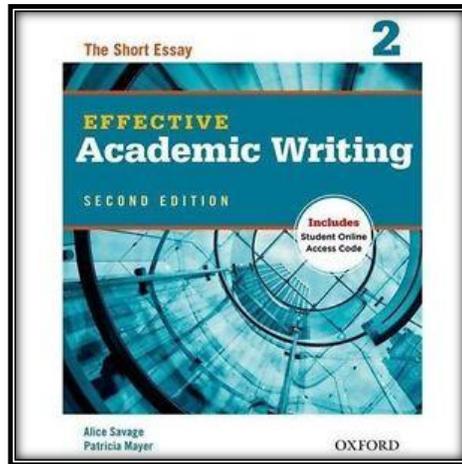
Step 2: Reading

Learners read p. 2 “Rhetorical Focus” aloud as a class. Discuss paragraph structure and formatting a paragraph. Address questions as they arise. If any learners question the last formatting requirement of double-spacing a paragraph, explain that it is not mandatory to double-space, but usually asked of high school and university students for ease of reading and editing.

Step 3: Checking Comprehension

In order to check for comprehension of what was read in the “Rhetorical Focus” section, float the room as learners complete Exercise 2 found on p. 3. Learners not only label the formatting elements of the paragraph as provided at the top of the page (i.e. double-spacing, margin, and indent), but they also answer questions about the topic sentence and supporting sentences. This requires learners to read the paragraph for understanding of the content and development within the paragraph in addition to its visual structure. Project a copy of the exercise in order to show learner answers for part A (labels) and some answers in part B that require circling and underlining information within the paragraph. Have learners report out their answers to questions 1-4. If there are any discrepancies in answers, discuss them thoroughly as a class.

Teacher Directions: Activity 2: Literacy/Transitions & Critical Thinking-Materials:
Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, p. 5; and a projector



Step 1: Setting the Context

A topic sentence is different from a topic in general, because a topic sentence is controlled. It is narrower than a general topic. For example, if someone were to write a short essay on pandas, the topic would be pandas, but the individual would have to choose a focus or opinion to have on pandas, because “pandas” is too broad, or general. An entire book could be written on pandas alone! Will the focus be on why pandas are endangered, on their diet, or on the fact that pandas aren’t actually bears at all? Explain to learners that they will be learning more about controlled topic sentences.

Step 2: Reading

Learners take turns reading aloud p. 5 “The Topic Sentence” under the next Rhetorical Focus section. There are four features of a successful topic sentence listed (condensed here):

- 1) It’s controlled; it contains an idea or opinion about the topic.
- 2) It must not be a simple fact or detail, nor can it be too general or unclear.
- 3) It should appear early, usually as the first or second sentence.
- 4) “The topic sentence implies the purpose of the paragraph: to explain, narrate, compare, describe, tell cause or effect, demonstrate or argue, or tell steps in a process.”

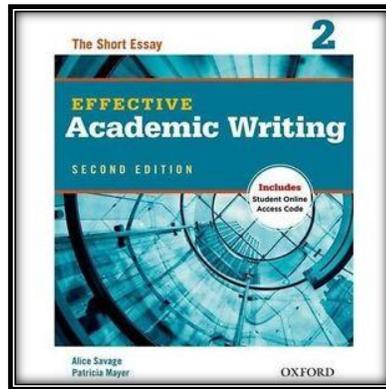
Step 3: Practice

Learners practice identifying topics and controlling ideas by completing Exercise 5 at the bottom of p. 5. They may do this individually or in pairs.

Step 4: Report Out

Learners come forward to a projector and share their answers. If there are any discrepancies, discuss correct answers as a class.

Teacher Directions: Activity 2: Grammar-Materials: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, pp. 20-21



Step 1: Setting the Context

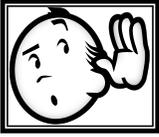
Read the Language and Grammar Focus on p. 20 as a class. Discuss the examples. Provide additional examples as necessary. Learners will see the difference between a simple sentence and a compound sentence. Oftentimes, compound sentences sound more fluid, or we often say less choppy, than simple sentences used repeatedly. The key to successful compound sentences is using the correct punctuation and conjunctions to join them.

Step 2: Pair Practice

Learners work in pairs to identify how many clauses are in each sentence of Exercise 1 “Identifying Clauses,” p. 21.

Step 3: Report Out

When asking learners to report out, ask them to also share what are the subjects and verbs that indicate a clause or clauses within each sentence. This will affirm whether they truly comprehend or are simply guessing, as they have a 50/50 chance of answering correctly.



Checking for Understanding—Materials: Handout: The Coconut Tree Script (Teacher Copy Only)

The Coconut Tree (Teacher Script)

Taken from *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay* by Alice Savage & Patricia Meyer, ES. 2

When I was a boy and first learning about the world, I took a big risk. (Topic sentence) I was playing in the yard outside of my family's house with my friends.⁽¹⁾ It was a hot day, and we were resting in the shady side of our house.⁽²⁾ One of my friends dared me to climb the coconut tree in our yard. I looked at the tree.⁽³⁾ It was mature and very tall, and it looked easy, but I had never tried before.⁽⁴⁾ I wanted to show my courage, so I said I would.⁽⁵⁾ The tree was scratchy, but I found places for my feet and hands and soon I was near the top.⁽⁶⁾ But then the tree began to move in the breeze.⁽⁷⁾ Suddenly I fell.⁽⁸⁾ There was a great pain in my arm.⁽⁹⁾ My friends ran to tell my mother who took me to the hospital.⁽¹⁰⁾ I had a broken arm, and one of my ribs was broken.⁽¹¹⁾ I felt bad for a long time after that.⁽¹²⁾ And the worst part was that every day I had to walk past the coconut tree and remember my foolish risk. (conclusion)

Nikki Carson-Padilla, Minnesota Literacy Council, 2014 p. 5 The Short Essay Unit

Set up: Place the following questions on the board and inform learners that this culminating activity is a listening exercise.

- 1) What is the topic sentence? Is it the first or the second sentence?**
- 2) How many supporting sentences do you hear? Listen carefully!**
- 3) Is there a concluding sentence? If yes, what is it? Can you describe it?**
- 4) What is the risk that the boy takes?**

Activity:

Learners listen as the teacher reads a paragraph entitled “The Coconut Tree”. The teacher may repeat the paragraph, but should not pass out the text, as this is the only explicit listening exercise for the learners today. When reading, be sure to sufficiently pause at periods, demonstrating minding punctuation when reading fluently and allowing learners to count supporting sentences. If desired, once learners have attempted answering the questions, a copy of the script can be projected so learners can see the underlined topic sentence and concluding sentence. If learners request a copy of the paragraph, it may be distributed, but not until all learners have attempted to answer the questions.

The Coconut Tree (Teacher Script)

Taken from *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay* by Alice Savage & Patricia Mayer, Ed. 2

When I was a boy and first learning about the world, I took a big risk.(Topic sentence) I was playing in the yard outside of my family's house with my friends.(1) It was a hot day, and we were resting in the shady side of our house.(2) One of my friends dared me to climb the coconut tree in our yard. I looked at the tree.(3) It was mature and very tall, and it looked easy, but I had never tried before.(4) I wanted to show my courage, so I said I would.(5) The tree was scratchy, but I found places for my feet and hands and soon I was near the top.(6) But then the tree began to move in the breeze.(7) Suddenly I fell.(8) There was a great pain in my arm.(9) My friends ran to tell my mother who took me to the hospital.(10) I had a broken arm, and one of my ribs was broken.(11) I felt bad for a long time after that.(12) And the worst part was that every day I had to walk past the coconut tree and remember my foolish risk.(conclusion)

Short Essay Unit: Week 1, Tuesday

Objectives <i>Learners will be able to...</i>	Materials
<p>Listening/speaking: listen for number of clauses within a sentence (discrete listening).</p> <p>Literacy: read a paragraph and find evidence of unity.</p> <p>Transitions & Critical Thinking: examine the organization of a paragraph, identifying the controlling idea and one irrelevant sentence.</p> <p>Grammar: correct run-on sentences by adding proper conjunctions.</p>	<p>Make Student Copies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: <i>Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay</i>, pp. 9-11, 15-16, 21-22 <p>Make Single Copies or Reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handout: Clause Count Ball Toss Prompts • Textbook: <i>Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay</i>, pp. 16-17 (p. 16 to project and p. 17 to cut out questions to be distributed to learners) • Handout: Unity Visual Aid <p>Props, Technology, or Other Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A projector • A beach ball

Lesson Plan

Review/Warm-up: Grammar & Listening/speaking

Description: Ball Toss activity to review clauses

Materials/Prep: A beach ball; **Clause Count Ball Toss Prompts** handout; specific directions in detailed plan

Activity 1: Literacy

Description: Read about the importance of unity within a paragraph and practice identifying the elements of unity within a student sample paragraph.

Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, pp. 9-11; Handout: **Unity Visual Aid** (single copy to be projected); and a **projector**

Activity 2: Grammar

Description: Correct run-on sentences by adding proper conjunctions from those provided in the instructions.

Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, pp. 21-22

Activity 3: Literacy & Transitions/Critical Thinking

Description: Read about the differences between a paragraph and a short essay. Read samples of each written on similar topics. Which is more interesting?

Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, pp.15-16

Checking for Understanding:

Description: Examine the paragraph and short essay.

Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, pp.16- 17 (**one copy of p. 16 to project and one copy of p. 17 to cut questions out and distribute to learners**) and a **projector**

**Teacher Directions: Review: Grammar & Listening/speaking—
Material: a beach ball; Handout: Clause Count Ball Toss Prompts**



Teacher reads:	Learner responds...
A <u>hook</u> <u>is</u> an opening sentence; <u>it</u> <u>attracts</u> the reader's attention.	2
<u>My sister</u> <u>is</u> a short woman with long blond hair and brown eyes.	1
<u>I</u> <u>love</u> to go the mall, so <u>my friends and I</u> <u>go</u> every weekend.	2
<u>Medicine</u> <u>is</u> very advanced today; <u>it</u> <u>can</u> <u>cure</u> many things.	2
<u>She</u> <u>walked</u> toward the dog slowly and carefully.	1
<u>The bus</u> <u>is</u> slow, but <u>it</u> <u>is</u> less expensive than a taxi.	2
<u>Writing</u> a short essay <u>is</u> not easy!	1

Note: Subjects are highlighted and main verbs are underlined (of each clause, whether dependent or independent). This is to assist in explaining the number of clauses if learners question the correct response.

Nikki Carson-Padilla, Minnesota Literacy Council, 2014 p. 15 The Short Essay Unit

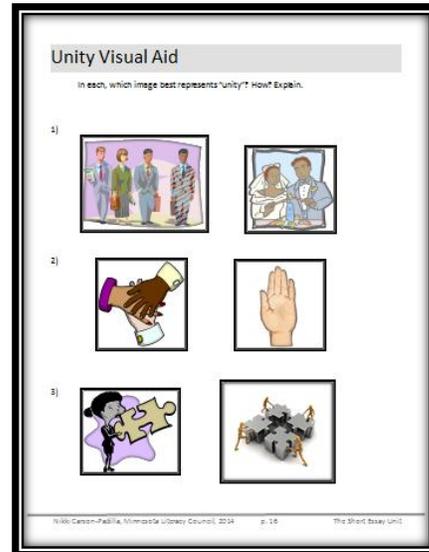
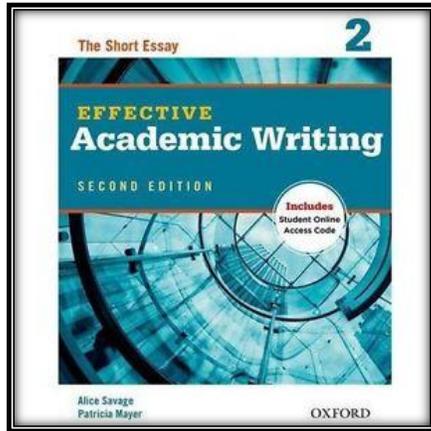
Step 1: Introduce Activity

As learners enter the classroom, have them form a large circle. Explain that they will be listening to the teacher read sentences. Whichever learner is holding the ball must announce the number of clauses he or she hears in the sentence read. Remind learners that each clause contains a subject and verb (acting as a verb).

Step 2: Playing Clause Count Ball Toss

Read one of the sentence prompts from the handout **Clause Count Ball Toss Prompts** (only for the instructor). Toss the beach ball to a learner and ask him/her to identify how many clauses were just read. Continue with the learner holding the ball tossing it to a learner of his/her choice. That learner responds with the most appropriate number of clauses for the next prompt read aloud by the instructor, and so on. To make the game more interesting, you may have the learners sit down when they make a mistake and play until only one learner remains standing. Depending on class size, more sentences may be needed to play in this manner. Pull from any convenient text, but be sure to quickly and accurately count the number of clauses (usually 1 or 2) per sentence.

Teacher Directions: Activity 1: Literacy—Material: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, pp. 9-11; Handout: Unity Visual Aid (single copy to be projected); and a projector



Step 1: Setting the Context

Write the following on the board and ask learners to take note: **Unity= a whole or totality combining all its parts into one OR oneness of mind or feeling (according to Dictionary.com)** Then, project the **Unity Visual Aid** handout and ask learners which image represents individuals in **unity**. Finally, have volunteers read the Rhetorical Focus on the top of p. 9 of *Effective Academic Writing 2* aloud in order to learn how unity works in a paragraph.

Step 2: Practice

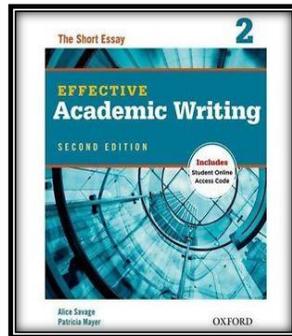
Learners read a student paragraph entitled “Stories of Nepal” on the bottom half of p. 9.

- **What single idea unifies the paragraph?**

Step 3: Checking for Understanding

In order to check for understanding, learners independently complete Exercise 2 on p. 10. Correct together as a class. In order to take things a step further, learners look for unity in supporting sentences by completing Exercise 3 on pp. 10-11. This may be completed in pairs so that learners have an opportunity to discuss and negotiate whether or not each sentence listed supports the topic sentence provided. Again, correct together as a class. If there is any discrepancy in answers, discuss correct responses.

**Teacher Directions: Activity 2: Grammar—Material: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing*
2: *The Short Essay*, pp. 21-22**



Step 1: Setting the Context

In order to have unity within a paragraph, a writer must also have clarity. If a reader is unsure of the message, there is no clarity. For example, read the following excerpt from a student’s writing:

I met my husband in high school. I got married three years later in 2004 I graduated from college.

Did the writer get married three years after meeting her husband, or did the writer graduate from college three years after she got married? Due to the run-on sentence, this is only clear to the writer. Readers have to make a guess!

This could be written correctly as either:

I met my husband in high school. I got married. Three years later, in 2004, I graduated from college.

OR

I met my husband in high school. I got married three years later. In 2004, I graduated from college.

Next, learners read the Language and Grammar Focus found on p. 21 explaining what constitutes as a run-on sentence. Two examples of run-on sentences and three possible solutions are provided: inserting a period and creating two sentences; inserting a comma and an appropriate conjunction; or inserting a semi-colon.

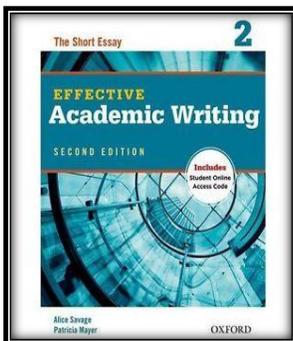
Step 2: Practice

Learners practice correcting run-on sentences using *and*, *or*, *so* or *but* by completing Exercise 2 on pp. 21 & 22. Inform learners that in some cases more than one conjunction may work. For example, “I am busy with work, **or** I am studying,” means something different than, “I am busy with work, **but** I am studying,” meaning I have a job, but it doesn’t stop me from finding time to study. Using “*or*” means I have two possible responsibilities. Some run-ons can only be corrected with one possible conjunction. For example, “Almost everyone in her neighborhood speaks her language, **so** she does not have to use English,” is the only logical option from the choices provided, because the dependent clause provides a result of the independent clause. Learners should work independently. Instructor floats the room to check for individual understanding.

Step 3: Correcting

Project a copy of Exercise 2. Learners volunteer to come forward and write their run-on corrections. Discuss whether or not proper conjunctions have been chosen. If learners suggest other conjunctions, discuss whether these are a possibility or not.

Teacher Directions: Activity 3: Literacy & Critical Thinking —Material: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay, pp. 15-16*



Step 1: Setting the Context

Learners read about the essential parts of a short essay by reading the Rhetorical Focus on p. 15. After reading what constitutes as an Introduction, Body Paragraphs, and a Conclusion, learners read through a graphic organizer comparing and contrasting an individual paragraph and a short essay. The organizer is basically two columns headed by **Paragraph** and **Short Essay** joined by arrows. Understanding the differences between an individual paragraph and a short essay will assist learners in organizing and developing more advanced and academic writing. Why write a short essay? Many learners may be asking

themselves this question. Most textbooks and websites jump right into the “how to write an essay,” but Skidmore College (a private liberal arts college in NY) provides a marvelous answer to the “why?”

One purpose of an essay is to test and assess the writing skills of students within a relatively brief format. Yet essays serve other intellectual purposes:

- to organize one's thinking
- to respond critically and personally to a problem or issue
- to select and use information to support an argument
- to present this argument in a structured and sophisticated way.

None of this will happen at once. The composition of essays is a continual process of learning and improvement. Pay attention to the feedback you receive from your instructors - and your peers, when possible. You will strengthen your writing most by pinpointing your weaknesses. <http://www.skidmore.edu/classics/pessays.html>

Step 2: Pair Reading

Learners pair up and read the sample paragraph about uncle Patricio and the short essay about a family of crazy, but talented people. Reading partners should take turns reading aloud. After all parts have been read, the question, “Which is more interesting, the paragraph or the short essay?” needs to be addressed. First, allow partners to discuss the question then, have a whole class discussion.

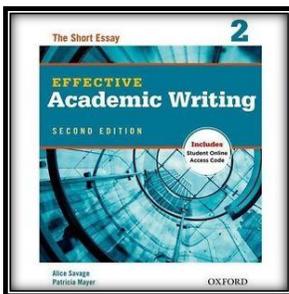
Step 3: Report Out

Learners share which they believe to be more interesting *and why*. If learners struggle finding the right words to explain why they find the short essay more interesting, guide them to use terms such as,

- descriptive
- details
- examples

If any learners argue that the paragraph is more interesting than the short essay, ask them to explain in what ways it is *more* interesting. The paragraph *is* interesting, but is it truly *more* interesting than the short essay?

Checking for Understanding—Materials: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing: The Short Essay*, p. 17 (One copy—questions cut out for 6 random learners, or two per learner if class is quite small); p. 16 (One copy—to be projected); a projector



Set up: Project a copy of p. 16, so learners can come forward and mark it.

Activity: Randomly pass out questions 1-6 from Exercise 2, p. 17 of the main text. Ask learners to come forward and complete the task on the projected copy. Discuss the accuracy of the response as a class.

Clause Count Ball Toss Prompts

Teacher reads:

Learner responds...

A hook <u>is</u> an opening sentence; it <u>attracts</u> the reader's attention.	2
My sister <u>is</u> a short woman with long blond hair and brown eyes.	1
I <u>love</u> to go the mall, so my friends and I <u>go</u> every weekend.	2
Medicine <u>is</u> very advanced today; it can <u>cure</u> many things.	2
She <u>walked</u> toward the dog slowly and carefully.	1
The bus <u>is</u> slow, but it <u>is</u> less expensive than a taxi.	2
Writing a short essay <u>is</u> not easy!	1

Note: Subjects are highlighted and main verbs are underlined (of each clause, whether dependent or independent). This is to assist in explaining the number of clauses if learners question the correct response.

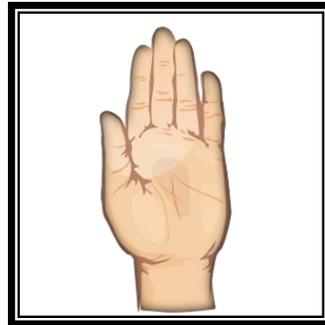
Unity Visual Aid

For each number, which image best represents “unity”? How? Explain.

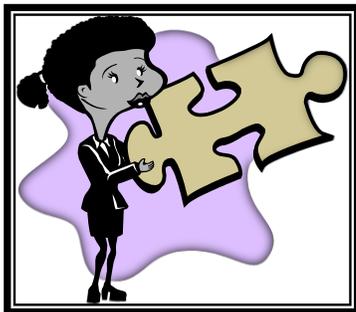
1)



2)



3)



Short Essay Unit: Week 1, Wednesday

Objectives <i>Learners will be able to...</i>	Materials
<p>Literacy: read for coherence within a paragraph.</p> <p>Literacy: read a short essay and determine the most suitable thesis statement using details and the conclusion.</p> <p>Listening/speaking: vocalize why a thesis statement is appropriate for a short essay.</p> <p>Transitions & Critical Thinking: recognize whether a paragraph moves from more important to less important or vice versa and why this may be.</p> <p>Transitions & Critical Thinking: choose a thesis statement that is controlled and logical.</p> <p>Grammar: correct run-on sentences with punctuations.</p>	<p>Make Student Copies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: <i>Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay</i>, pp. 11 (optional), 12-14, 18-19, 23 • Organizing a Coherent Paragraph handout <p>Make Single Copies or Reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: <i>Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay</i>, p. 11 (optional to photocopy for learners— one copy needed to project) <p>Props, Technology, or Other Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A projector

Lesson Plan

Review/Warm-up : Literacy & Critical Thinking

Description: Read a paragraph; identify the topic sentence, and identify the irrelevant sentences.

Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, p. 11 (Exercise 4 “Editing for Unity”)

Activity 1: Literacy & Critical Thinking

Description: Read about Coherence in a paragraph and practice placing sentences in logical time order.

Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, pp. 12-14; **Organizing a Coherent Paragraph** handout

Activity 2: Grammar

Description: Correct run-on sentences with punctuations.

Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, p. 23

Activity 3: Literacy & Critical Thinking

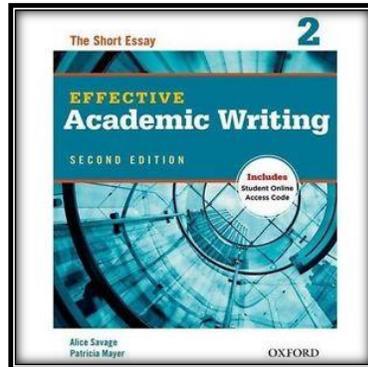
Description: Read short essays and determine the best thesis statements using details and conclusions.

Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, p. 18-19

Wrap-up/Exit Ticket: Listening/speaking

Learners report two things they learned today and will use or share beyond the classroom.

Teacher Directions: Review/Warm-up: Literacy & Critical Thinking—Materials:
Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, p. 11 and a projector



Set Up/Providing Context:

Project the paragraph from p. 11. Read the instructions and observe the example irrelevant sentence as a class. Review what “irrelevant” means. If something is relevant, it is on topic or connected to the main idea. If something is irrelevant, it is just the opposite; it is off topic or disconnected from the main idea.

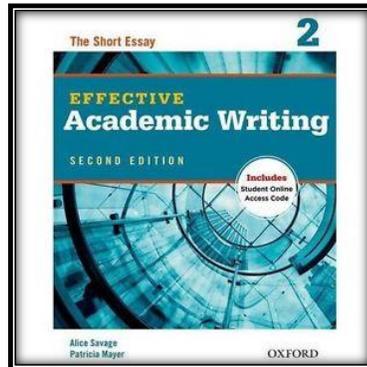
The Activity:

Three volunteers come forward to each cross off an irrelevant sentence in the paragraph. If there is any discrepancy about which sentences are irrelevant, or confusion about why they are irrelevant, discuss what the controlled topic is and how the irrelevant sentences do not support it. For example, “I studied dinosaurs a lot when I was young, and I am very fond of them,” may be true and may have a connection to the sentence preceding it, but it has no connection to the writer watching pelicans.

The three irrelevant sentences are as follows:

- I studied dinosaurs a lot when I was young, and I am very fond of them. (*not about pelicans*)
- My brother also really likes pelicans. (*not about the writer’s fascination with pelicans*)
- Sometimes there is an oil rig or a cargo ship in the water, too. (*not about pelicans*)

Teacher Directions: Activity 1: Literacy & Critical Thinking-Materials: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, pp. 12-14 and Organizing a Coherent Paragraph handout



Step 1: Setting the Context

Learners explore coherence in a paragraph by reading the Rhetorical Focus on the bottom of p. 12. If learners are confused by the difference between unity and coherence, explain that **unity** has more to do with development and **coherence** has more to do with organization. Unity is about all details being on topic; whereas, coherence is about all the details being provided in a logical order.

Step 2: Read and Examine

First, the instructor reads the paragraph on p. 13 aloud to the class; then, learners re-read the paragraph independently. Finally, learners examine the paragraph for coherence by answering the questions in Exercise 7. There are only 3 questions. The first two are direct comprehension questions; however, the last question is a critical thinking question. Learners will need to find evidence of their response in throughout the paragraph, but they will not be able to copy an answer directly from the text.

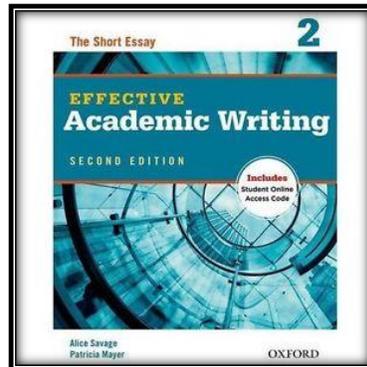
Step 3: Report Out

Learners share their responses with the class. Discuss correct responses. Point out transitions within the paragraph that help to indicate the ideas move from less to more important, for example, "Perhaps the most important rule of all is..."

Step 4: Optional Extension

If learners seem ready for a next step, have learners work in pairs to organize sentence strips to form a coherent paragraph in a logical order. Use the sentences from page 14, also copied on the handout **Organizing a Coherent Paragraph**. You may want to choose the first sentence strip or two as a whole class before learners work in pairs. Check answers as a whole group, on overhead.

**Teacher Directions: Activity 2: Grammar-Materials: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing*
2: *The Short Essay*, p. 23**



Step 1: Setting the Context

Learners review what constitutes as a run-on sentence. You may refer them to the Language and Grammar Focus on p. 21 (read yesterday), so they can re-read about the three possible solutions: inserting a period and creating two sentences; inserting a comma and an appropriate conjunction; or inserting a semi-colon. Today, learners will focus on whether clauses have the proper punctuation. The semi-colon is the most mysterious of the punctuation points. Learners often ask, “When do I use the comma with a period on the top?” A helpful way to decide if a semi-colon should be used is to ask three simple things:

- Are there two independent clauses?
- Are they closely related to each other in content?
- Are the two clauses about the same length?

If you answer “yes” to all three questions, you may use a semi-colon to join the two clauses.

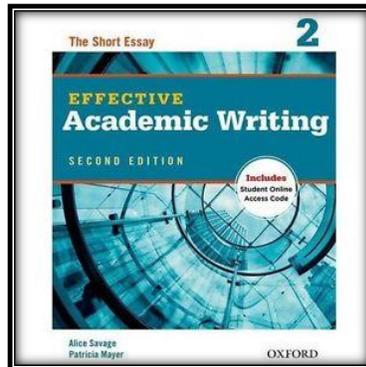
Step 2: Practice

Learners practice correcting run-on sentences with the proper punctuation by completing Exercise 4 on p. 23. Directions are given in the textbook. Correct together as a class.

Answers:

1. I went to the store with my friend Rachel. We bought milk.
2. Correct
3. I noticed that there was a little dirt on the floor. The DVD player was missing; nothing else was gone.
4. Correct
5. Correct
6. They took statements. Later that afternoon, they found the robbers and Rachel’s DVD player.

Teacher Directions: Activity 3: Literacy & Critical Thinking-Materials: Textbook:
Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay, pp. 18-19



Step 1: Setting the Context

Learners solidify their understanding of the difference between a topic, a topic sentence, and a thesis statement.

A topic= the general idea or subject of any piece of writing

A topic sentence= a sentence that provides the controlled main idea of a paragraph

A thesis statement=one or two sentences that provide the controlled idea or claim of an essay

Understanding these will help learners with the following:

- Finding the important points when reading a report, essay, news article, or textbook
- Writing with unity and coherence
- Developing a conclusion (restating the thesis statement is often one way to write an effective conclusion)
- Answer test questions about main idea (e.g. too broad or too narrow)

Step 2: Pair Reading

Learners pair up and read the short essay on p. 18. Together, they determine which thesis statement best suits the essay considering the reasons and conclusion provided. There are three options: a, b, and c. In the same pairs, read short essay B on p. 19. Together, write an appropriate thesis statement for this short essay using the narrative and conclusion to determine the main topic and controlling idea. (Reference the bottom of page 18, example A for an example of a good thesis statement in the context of that short essay.)

Step 3: Report Out

Pairs share the best thesis statements with the class. Discuss why **choice A** is the best option for short essay A. Discuss whether learners' thesis statements for short essay B are appropriate, too broad, or too narrow.

Wrap-up/Exit Ticket: Listening/Speaking

Learners report two things they learned today and will use or share beyond the classroom.

Organizing a Coherent Paragraph

Cut the following sentences into sentence strips. Give each pair of learners one set to organize together.

My family hugged me and cried because I had been gone so long.

I will never forget one day when I had to travel alone on the subway.

I was sick, and I had to go to an appointment at the hospital.

When my appointment ended, I got on the subway to go home.

That was why my surroundings looked unfamiliar.

My appointment was at 1:00 p.m.

Suddenly I looked up and did not know where I was.

I was exhausted and fell asleep on my way home.

Then I realized that I had fallen asleep.

It took me five more hours to get back to my home.

Short Essay Unit: Week 1, Thursday

Objectives <i>Learners will be able to...</i>	Materials
<p>Literacy: write a paragraph with unity and cohesion.</p> <p>Listening/speaking: dictate sentences to a partner about the organization and development of a short essay.</p> <p>Listening/speaking: orally share their written work and discretely listen for classmates' coherence (time order or order of importance).</p> <p>Transitions & Critical Thinking: identify controlling ideas within topic sentences and cross out irrelevant sentences.</p> <p>Grammar: correct run-on sentences with proper punctuation.</p>	<p>Make Student Copies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Textbook:</u> <i>Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay</i>, pp. 24-26 • Handout: Cohesive and Unified Paragraph Prompts <p>Make Single Copies or Reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESL Tutor Manual, p. 60 (Walking Dictation) • Handout: Short Essay Walking Dictation <p>Props, Technology, or Other Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A projector

Lesson Plan

Review/Warm-up: Listening/Speaking, Literacy & Grammar

Description: Complete a walking dictation in pairs.

Materials/Prep: Handout: **Short Essay Walking Dictation**; write instructions on the board before learners enter the classroom (see detailed plan for specific steps)

Activity 1: Test Prep

Description: Learners take a practice test reviewing all of the content learned this week: controlling ideas, irrelevant sentences, thesis statements, and run-ons.

Materials/Prep: Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing 2: The Short Essay*, pp. 24-26, "Putting It All Together"

Activity 2: Literacy & Critical Thinking

Description: Write a paragraph with a clear topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

Materials/Prep: Handout: **Cohesive and Unified Paragraph Prompts**

Wrap up:

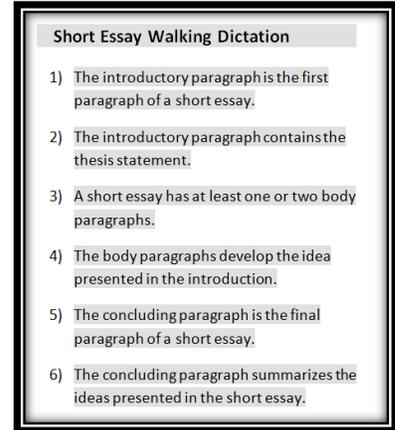
Learners volunteer to share their paragraphs with the class. Listeners listen for the topic sentence and whether the paragraph was organized in time order or order of importance.

Teacher Directions: Review/Warm-up: Listening/speaking, Literacy & Grammar-

Materials: Handout: **Short Essay Walking Dictation**; **ESL Tutor Manual, p. 60** (reference); and a **projector** (for corrections)

Set up:

Sentences need to be cut out. The first three should be taped in a hallway nearby the classroom. The other three should be kept close by for the second round.



Step 1: Setting the Context

Learners partner up in order to dictate sentences to each other. The sentences pertain to what is needed in order to write a short essay. Partners choose who will write and who will go to the hall to view the first set of three sentences.

Step 2: Dictating

Share the following rules for dictation before beginning:

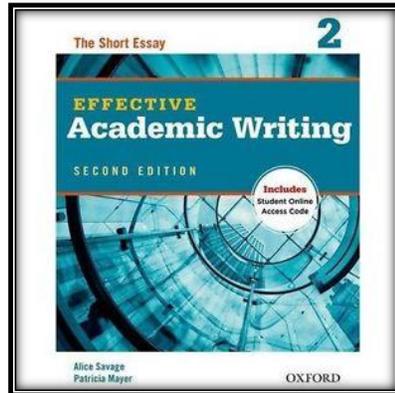
1. Listeners should **not interrupt** mid-sentence. This is discouraging to their partners.
2. Readers should **read slowly, but naturally**, not stopping after each word and not reading punctuation signs.
3. **Readers should not write down anything!** When they enter the hallway, they should not take any writing utensils or cell phones with them (as they can be used to take pictures of the sentences). The information **needs to be conveyed orally**.

The learner who reads the sentences must memorize and return to his or her partner without writing anything down. This partner is the “dictator” and may run back to the hall as many times as necessary; however, the aim is to memorize as much of a sentence at once as possible. After three sentences have been completed by all pairs, the instructor changes the sentences in the hall for a fresh set of three sentences and the partners switch roles.

Step 4: Correcting

After dictating, project an original copy of the six sentences, so learners may correct their exercise. It is best if learners use a different colored pen in order to do this, so they are not simply erasing and making all of their sentences perfect. This allows learners to reflect on their mistakes. Learners should pay special attention to subordinating conjunctions and punctuation joining clauses.

Teacher Directions: Activity 1: Literacy/ Transitions & Critical Thinking-Materials:
Textbook: *Effective Academic Writing: The Short Essay*, pp. 24-26, “Putting It All Together”



Step 1: Setting the Context

Learners take a summative test to inform the instructor of their individual understanding of the following concepts: **identifying the controlling idea in a topic sentence; identifying and eliminating irrelevant sentences; choosing appropriate thesis statements for short essays; and, correcting run-on sentences with proper punctuation.** Throughout the week, learners read about the importance of these concepts and practiced the skills in pairs or individually.

Step 2: Take the Unit Review TEST

Learners complete Exercises 1-5 on pp. 24-26 independently. Remind learners to read the directions for each exercise carefully before beginning. For example, Exercise 2 specifically informs learners that there are five irrelevant sentences before they begin. In addition, Exercise 3 is a multiple choice exercise, so learners should not spend a lot of time developing their own thesis statement.

Step 3: Reviewing Answers

Use a projector to review the questions. Invite learners to come up and share their answers. They should also identify for the class the key information that helped them determine their answers, especially in Exercises 2 and 3. If collecting tests, learners will need to use recall to review answers with the whole class.

Note: Instructor may determine whether learners submit their “Putting It All Together” review tests or not. If floating the room to check for individual understanding is sufficient, submission of the tests may not be necessary.

Teacher Directions: Activity 2: Literacy & Critical Thinking-Materials: Handout: Cohesive and Unified Paragraph Prompts

Cohesive and Unified Paragraph Prompts

Directions: Choose **one** and write a paragraph. Use the checklist below to guide you as you write. Think about sharing your paragraph with your classmates.

- 1) Who is a very important person in your life, and why?
- 2) What is an ideal job for you, and why?
- 3) What are important classroom rules at your school?

Paragraph Writing Checklist



- Do you have an introduction to the topic?
- Do you have a controlled topic sentence?
- Do all of your supporting sentences support your topic sentence? Do you avoid irrelevant sentences?
- Do you use logical order?
- Do you have a concluding sentence?
- Do you avoid run-on sentences?

Nikki Carson-Padilla, Minnesota Literacy Council, 2014 p. 27 The Short Essay Unit

Step 1: Setting the Context

So far, learners have read about the difference between a paragraph and a short essay and have learned how to identify a topic sentence and thesis statement; however, they have not had an in-class opportunity to develop their own cohesive paragraph with a controlled topic sentence. This is the best way to determine if they truly understand the writing process—to actually write!

Step 2: Writing

Provide learners with the handout **Cohesive and Unified Paragraph Prompts**. Learners choose a prompt and write using the checklist on the bottom half of the handout as a guide.

Wrap-up

Learners volunteer to share their paragraphs with the class. Listeners listen for the topic sentence and whether the paragraph was organized in time order or order of importance.

Short Essay Walking Dictation

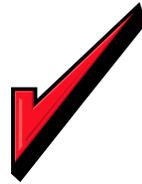
- 1) The introductory paragraph is the first paragraph of a short essay.
- 2) The introductory paragraph contains the thesis statement.
- 3) A short essay has at least one or two body paragraphs.
- 4) The body paragraphs develop the idea presented in the introduction.
- 5) The concluding paragraph is the final paragraph of a short essay.
- 6) The concluding paragraph summarizes the ideas presented in the short essay.

Cohesive and Unified Paragraph Prompts

Directions: Choose **one** and write a paragraph. Use the checklist below to guide you as you write. Think about sharing your paragraph with your classmates.

- 1) **Who is a very important person in your life, and why?**
- 2) **What is an ideal job for you, and why?**
- 3) **What are important classroom rules at your school?**

Paragraph Writing Checklist



- Do you have an introduction to the topic?
- Do you have a controlled topic sentence?
- Do all of your supporting sentences support your topic sentence? Do you avoid irrelevant sentences?
- Do you use logical order?
- Do you have a concluding sentence?
- Do you avoid run-on sentences?