

Lesson 5.4

Putting It All Together

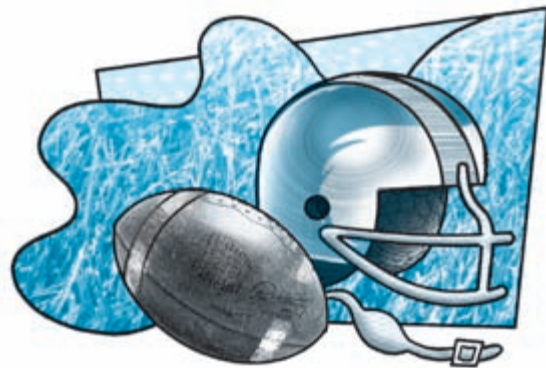
Suppose, at the very beginning of this unit, someone had handed you a two-page manuscript and said, “Here. Revise this for fluency.” Would you have known what to do? If so, good for you! If not, maybe you have a few more ideas up your reviser’s sleeve now. We hope so, because revision—really good, purposeful revision—depends on skills. Can you recall the skills you practiced in the last three lessons? Brainstorm a quick class list. Then your teacher will offer you some reminders.

Choosing a Good Topic

This lesson begins with the creation of a writing sample. And as you know, that begins with choosing a topic. This time, however, choosing has two parts, and you’ll work with your writing circle for both of them.

Part 1

We have a hunch you’ll like this part. You get to coach your teacher in coming up with a writing topic he or she likes. Have a 5-minute discussion. Think about a topic you feel would be right because (1) it’s something your teacher knows a lot about or definitely finds interesting and (2) it’s a topic you would enjoy reading about. At the end of the 5 minutes, be prepared to offer 1 or 2 suggestions—no more. Your teacher will make a choice after hearing all suggestions (but may or may not share that choice with you just yet).



Part 2

You're probably not surprised to discover that it's now *your* turn to come up with a topic. We're not offering any hints or lists this time. You're on your own—except that you have the help of your writing circle teammates. Take about 6 to 8 minutes to think of a good writing topic. Choose something you know well—and something you think **YOUR TEAM** will enjoy reading about. **HINT:** You can all write about the same general topic, but each person can approach it in his or her own way.



Writing a Draft

For this part of the lesson, you will work on your own. Take about 5 minutes to do some planning, using any prewriting strategy you like: reading and thinking, sketching, making a list or web, etc. Then write for about 15 minutes. As you write, be sure you

- write on every other line to allow room for revision.
- leave big margins.
- keep your main message clearly in mind.
- read along in your head as you write, as if you were reading aloud.

Sharing, Listening, Responding

Part 1

Listen as your teacher shares his or her draft aloud. Be prepared to offer honest, helpful, supportive feedback. Comment on the strengths you hear as well as any strategies you feel he or she could use to improve as a writer.

Part 2

Now read your own work in your writing group, keeping in mind your role as a responder and writer.

As a Responder . . . Ask writers questions or offer suggestions about strategies to improve fluency. Be sure every comment supports your classmate as a writer.

As a Writer . . . When it's your time to share, listen with an open mind to your group's feedback. Make notes to remember helpful suggestions. Be prepared to put the most useful suggestions into action. Good feedback is all about improving your writing!

Reflecting . . .

Now that you've shared and discussed your writing sample, you're ready to revise—almost. Before you start, take a moment to reflect on specific strategies you think will be helpful. Think about the comments from your group and your own response to your draft. Put a check next to each of the revision strategies you think could make your writing stronger.

☐ **Combine choppy sentences** to create longer, more rhythmic ones.

☐ **Vary sentence length.**

- ☐ **Shorten sentences** that are too long.
- ☐ **Select strong, appropriate transitional words** to connect ideas.
- ☐ **Eliminate transition overload.**
- ☐ **Vary sentence beginnings** to avoid monotonous repetition.

... Then Revising

Revise your draft for the trait of Fluency. Go back frequently to read it aloud, getting the feel and the sound. Think about

- Variety
- Rhythm
- Meaning
- Readability

Take your time. Go back more than once. Be a bit ruthless. Imagine your draft was written by someone else—someone who said, “Give me all the help you can!” Put your heart, soul, and pencil into it.

Share and Compare

Regroup in your writing circles. This time, before you read your draft, tell which feedback helped you most and why. Explain *how* you revised. Then read your revision. As others share their revisions, think about additional strategies—or sentence styles—you could try next time.



A Writer's Questions

Suppose that as a writer—and you're getting to be an experienced writer, after all—you disagree with the feedback you receive from a partner or writing group. What should you do? Follow it anyway? Discuss your options. Do reviewers always know best?



Putting It to the Test

Right now, if you wanted to, you could reach for a rubric and score the writing you just finished for fluency—or for any trait. (And you might even want to do that.) Let's say you were taking a writing test, though, and you didn't have a rubric handy. Could you still assess your own writing pretty effectively? How?