

**Lesson 5.4**

# Smooth Sailing

**W**hether piloting an airplane or an ocean-going ship, the captain is responsible for charting the smoothest course possible. A captain must do more than flick on the fasten-seatbelt sign or shout “Batten down the hatches!” when the going gets rough. As a writer, you are the captain of your ideas. You’re in control and must use all your skills to make sure no obstacles prevent your message from getting through. In this unit you’ve revised several pieces to increase the fluency and practiced using strategies to make even rough drafts stronger. Now it’s time to put these skills together. Ready? Then smooth sailing ahead!

## Creating a Draft

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Time to create a rough draft. This portion of the lesson has two parts, and we think you’ll really like the first part.

### Part 1

Coach your teacher in choosing a topic he or she could write about spontaneously as you create your own rough drafts. Choose a topic your teacher knows well enough to write about without research and likes well enough to write about with strong voice. Each writing circle has five minutes to think of one or two suggestions, no more. Choose wisely. When you offer your suggestions, your teacher will make a choice but may or may not tell you what it is (just yet).

**Part 2**

For this second part of the lesson, you need to choose a topic for yourself. Choose any topic you wish, or use our list to help you think of an idea.

- ★ My topic \_\_\_\_\_
- Secrets to writing with fluency
  - The most fluent writer (in my humble opinion) on the planet
  - The best grilled chicken (vegetables/steaks/fish) ever
  - Guidelines for effective blogging
  - Technology in twenty years

**Prewriting**

Once you have your topic clearly in mind, spend about five minutes prewriting. You may choose to complete any of the following.

- Make a sketch
- List details
- List questions a reader might have

Or do anything else that gets the wheels turning and the thoughts flowing.

**Drafting**

Use the remaining class time to write. If you get stuck, do one of the following things.

- Look back at your prewriting for a new idea.
- Read the model passage you identified as your inspiration.
- Try to write just ONE more sentence (then one more after that).
- Keep the writing flowing as much as possible. Stay quiet so all the writers (including your teacher) can concentrate.

## Sharing and Plotting Your Revision

Find the draft you completed in the first part of this lesson. Read it over quickly and quietly to yourself, making any last-minute changes you wish. Then share your writing aloud in your writing circle. As you share or listen, keep the following suggestions in mind.

### **As a writer . . .**

Don't apologize for your writing. Just read. Keep your mind open. Make notes directly on your work about helpful suggestions. Use any helpful comments and insights when you revise. Remember, you can't expect others to hear your writing exactly the way you do. That's why you need another perspective!

### **As a responder . . .**

Focus your comments on fluency. Ask questions and make positive suggestions about strategies to improve sentence fluency. Remember, all comments should be supportive.

## Charting a Course for Revision

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On your own, plan your revision. You should have ideas from many sources, such as the following.

- Your group's comments
- Your class list of fluency secrets
- Your own notes
- Your model passage and any other literature that inspires you



In addition, we're offering you a quick checklist of things to try. Read the following and check at least two things you feel you'll do as you revise.

- Vary sentence beginnings
- Vary sentence lengths
- Connect ideas logically
- Read aloud to check the flow of ideas
- Combine short choppy sentences to make one smooth sentence
- Divide overly-long sentences into two or more smaller sentences
- Correct run-ons
- Use repetition for special effect
- Try writing a sentence several ways to see what works best

Use scratch paper for your revision. Write for at least 15 minutes. Your teacher will let you know when three wrap-up minutes remain.

### Share and Compare

When you finish revising, meet with a partner and take turns reading your revised work aloud. Discuss the kinds of changes you made and the strategies you used. Give your partner specific, positive feedback—not just suggestions, but what you liked. Take in your partner's comments about your work, as well. After sharing, take another 3–4 minutes to make any final changes you thought of during your sharing time.

## Revision in Action

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Your teacher is about to share his or her rough draft and revision. As you watch and listen, be looking for specific strategies your teacher used to improve the fluency of the rough draft. Comment on what you like or might try in your own work. If you hear or see something (however small) that should be added to your list of fluency secrets, be sure to mention it.



### A Writer's Questions

As you plan your revision, it's helpful to have a partner with whom to share your writing. What can you do if a partner is not available? Can you coach yourself?



### Putting It to the Test

Even though you cannot really study for an on-demand writing test, are there things you can do to prepare? What are some things a writer could do the night before on-demand writing to help make fluency (or anything about the writing) stronger?