



# GEAR UP Teaching Tips



GEAR UP For College

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## Reading and Writing Activities

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GEAR UP FOR COLLEGE

A good teacher is like a candle - it consumes itself to light the way for others.

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The most important factor in writing exercises is that students need to be personally involved in order to make the learning experience of lasting value. Encouraging student participation in the exercise, while at the same time refining and expanding writing skills, requires a certain pragmatic approach. Teachers should be clear on what skills he/she is trying to develop. Next, the teacher needs to decide on which means (or type of exercise) can facilitate learning of the target area. Once the target skill areas and means of implementation are defined, the teacher can then proceed to focus on the writing strategy that can provide the best results. By combining these objectives and activities, the teacher can expect both enthusiasm and effective learning.

You may begin this by soliciting your students feedback, or conducting a students and teacher brainstorming session. By choosing a topic together, effective learning can be achieved.

Determining a writing strategy to use with students to enhance the writing exercise is extremely important. While there are a variety of strategies that can be applied, it is most effective when your strategy is aligned with the task at hand. For example, if the task is general such as writing an informal letter; using small group work where students can learn from another would be best. However, if the task is test-taking; a teacher-guided strategy would be more effective. Attached are 4 reading and writing teaching strategies that have proven to be exciting, engaging and fun.



## Activity #1: "RAFT" Role, Audience, Format, Topic.

### Purpose:

The RAFT technique provides an easy, meaningful way to incorporate writing into content-area instruction. It includes the following four components:

**R:** Role of Writer - Who are you?

**A:** Audience - To whom is this written?

**F:** Format - What form will it take?

**T:** Topic + strong verb - What important topic have I chosen?

Choose a strong verb to describe your intent.

### Procedures:

1. Explain that all writers need to consider these four components for every writing.
2. Brainstorm ideas about a topic. Select several topics from those mentioned.
3. Write RAFT on the board or paper and list possible roles, audiences, formats, and strong verbs that are appropriate for each topic.
4. Give students some examples to write about or after discussing a topic, have students create their own RAFT writing assignment.

## Activity #2: Unsent Letter

### **Purpose:**

To help students write about topics in a more thoughtful way and to add variety to their writing assignments.

### **Procedure:**

In this writing to learn activity, students enter a role play situation in which they respond to the material being studied in the lesson by writing letters. The activity requires the use of imagination and often requires students to engage in interpretive and evaluative thinking. The letters may be written to a historical figure, a famous person, or someone in the student's life. The letters should reflect the students' understanding of the material being studied.

## Activity #3: Sentence Pattern Review

**Purpose:** To help students review parallel structures in preparation for the SAT

**Procedure:** Review rules 1-3 below, then help students apply rules by creating worksheets or grammar games.

In a series of two or more, each element must appear in the same grammatical form or structure and perform the same grammatical function. Good writers use **parallel structure** to "beat a rhythmic drum," establish a pattern, and repeat & stress an idea.

### **Rule #1:**

Writers should use parallelism to presenting a series of items. An example is:

- Popular summer vacation activities include visiting relatives, hiking in state parks, and spending time at the beach.

### **Rule #2**

Writers should use parallelism when offering choices. An example is:

- The instructor announced that each student in the class could either write a ten-page report or take the final exam.

### **Rule #3**

Writers should use parallelism when making a point effectively. An example is:

- "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." –President John F. Kennedy
- "Don't ask what your country can do for you. Instead, you should be asking what you can do for your country" – not quite the same tone or emphasis!

## Activity #4: Mysterious Possibilities

**Description:** This is a short, quick strategy intended to capture student interest, focus attention, and arouse curiosity. The strategy integrates elements of group brainstorming and predicting. It is particularly useful when students have little prior knowledge about a topic or question the relevance of it.

**Procedure:** With an air of mystery, the teacher shows an object, photograph, picture, or some other form of visual stimuli. Students are asked to solve the mystery by brainstorming and predicting possible connections to the topic. The teacher engages the class in discussion and uses the generated list of ideas as springboard to the new lesson content.

**Variations:** As the students generate and list ideas, they explain each possible connection. Teachers may read a short passage, show a brief video clip, or play part of a recording in place of visual stimuli. Some teachers extend this strategy by having students create their own mysterious possibilities presentation, display, or poster.

# MATH TEACHING STRATEGIES



## The Power of Writing Reflections

**Class Reflections:** Most math instructors feel that when teaching mathematics, the only focus is on numbers, numbers, and numbers. Everyone can agree that mathematics is not an easy subject that you could wrap your head around overnight. In order to master the linguistics of mathematics, it is very crucial that instructors implement the power of writing into their weekly instruction. Allow the students some time to reflect upon the material that was covered on a weekly basis. Encourage them to write a page on what they have learned as well as express any ambiguities they may have encountered throughout the week. Their papers should include newly gained knowledge with examples, brief description of day-to-day activities, and comments or constructive feedback on the teacher's instructional methods. Along with the fact that these papers will be a perfect documentation of the student's progress, the student's feedback could also be taken as constructive criticism the instructor could use to become a more effective teacher.

## Interact for Impact

**Math Networking:** Math instructors face a lot of complications in trying to teach mathematics, all because the subject is difficult in and of itself. We have all heard of the saying, Rome was not built in one day! We can also say that Rome was not built by one person. Networking holds prudence in the student's success. Teachers, get together and share insights on how to better teach mathematics. Invite other math instructors into your class and allow them to observe your instructional methods. Ask them to give you feedback, and be open-minded. In turn, ask for their permission to observe them in their classroom. Take notes during your observation and make sure you give feedback to them as well. Share your experiences and generate ideas on how to become more effective math teachers.

## Learning Partners

**Learning Partners:** You will be surprised with what the students could teach you. Make your students your learning partners. Discuss math problems thoroughly and be prepared to answer questions from your students. Constantly ask students questions that you do not really know the answer to. This will temporarily break the teacher-student barrier and the students will realize that you are also learning as well. They will respect you as an instructor mainly because you are open to their opinions. This will increase student productivity in class, and decrease classroom management problems.

## Math Activity #1: Break My Rule

**Description:** This activity focuses in on the student's ability to recognize and comprehend numerical patterns or sequences. Students will be encouraged to use reasoning in number sense to identify the "rule" of the number sequence and project the forthcoming terms. It is good practice for the student's knowledge of numbers and operations as well as strengthens the student's cooperative learning skills.

**Procedures:** Work in teams of 4. Each team creates a rule and writes a sequence of numbers that follows that rule. For example, the sequence {1, 6, 11, ....}. The object of the game is to guess another team's rule or prove the existence of another rule. Student competency will drive the sequence's complexity, making the game more interesting. There are several rules that may be given for the simple example. For instance, students may say that the rules are:

1. There is a 1's in the ones place and a six in the ones place in every other number.
2. It skip counting by fives starting with 1.
3. Odd, Even, Odd, Even,
4. And so on.....

# SAT Math - Problem Solving Strategy: SQRQCQ

## **Description:**

*This strategy is a systematic way to list and organize the information given in a word problem. Word problems can be very complicated when we do not have a plan of attack. This strategy will enable students to identify and classify relevant and irrelevant information, generate and evaluate equations, and refine their critical thinking and reasoning skills.*

## **Procedures:**

**S - Survey:** *Read the entire problem to get a general idea or understanding of it.*

**Q - Question:** *Come up with questions - what you believe the problem is asking for.*

**R - Reread:** *Go back and read the problem to identify facts, relevant information, and details you will need to solve it.*

**Q - Question:** *Ask questions specifically on what mathematical properties and operations to apply.*

**C - Compute:** *With the equation formulated, compute the answer-solve the problem.*

**Q - Question:** *At this point, question the accuracy of the answer. Check your work and ask questions like: Is it correct? Is the answer reasonable and probable? Does the answer make sense?*

## **Tips to Remember for the SAT Essay**

1. **Read the assignment first.**
2. **Second, read the quote or passage** as it guides the essay topic.
3. Essay graders will be looking for whether the **subject matter is relevant** to the assignment and quote or passage.
4. Graders will also be checking to see if your position is **persuasive and insightful.**
5. It is very important to **take a firm stance** and to stick to it.

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## Something to think about

**Teaching is the profession  
that teaches all the other  
professions**

*I like a teacher who gives you  
something to take home to think  
about besides homework.*

*What the teacher is, is more  
important than what he teaches.*

## **Sample:**

Consider the following statement and assignment. Then write an essay as directed.

*"The greatest griefs are those we  
cause ourselves."*

- Sophocles

## **Assignment:**

*What do you think of the view  
that the worst sorrows are those  
for which we are responsible? In  
an essay, support your position by  
discussing an example (or exam-  
ples) from literature, science and  
technology, the arts, current  
events, or your own experience or  
observation.*