



Research-Based Writing Supported by Over 30 Years of Proven Results

January 2018

# *The Collins Writing Exchange*

Ideas, Tips, and Resources on Writing from [Collins Education Associates](#)

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## *Featured Writing Assignment*

### **Informative Writing: Conveying Important Information**

Informative writing is a critical life skill as it involves a variety of thinking and writing skills, including explaining, informing, describing, comparing, and summarizing. Select one of the ready-to-use informative assignments below, which include Focus Correction Areas (FCAs) and other prewriting steps, to guide your students to success. Note that we're also providing an assignment tailored especially for career and technology high school students, too.

- [Keeping a Groundhog Day Weather Journal](#) (Primary)
- [Making and Explaining a Tangram Puzzle](#) (Elementary)
- [Advice from a Middle School Expert: A How-To Guide](#) (Middle School)
- [Writing a Troubleshooter's Handbook for the Homework Hotline](#) (High School)
- [Supervisor's Memo to Co-Workers](#) (Career & Tech High School)

#### *Special Note:*

To support your teachers' use of the program, consider having a Collins Associate demonstrate informative assignments or model other lessons in your classrooms.

[Email](#) or call us at 800-932-4477.

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## *Excerpts from Collins Online Conversations*

### **Guidelines for Getting to Type Five Writing**

In a recent Collins Online Conversation session with teachers from Altoona, PA, John Collins answered a series of questions about their implementation of the program. See a [summary](#) of John's answer to the question in his blog: Do students go through Type Three and Type Four writing in order to reach a Type Five?

See our [blog posts](#) for suggestions from John and other associates on important issues related to effective writing instruction.

Type Five: Publish

Type Five writing is error free and of publishable quality. *Multiple drafts.*

*Special Note:*

Looking for a way to support your teachers' use of Collins Writing but don't have an available in-service day? Schedule an online 1- to 2½-hour Collins Online Conversation focused on your staff's specific needs. See our [detailed menu of training topics](#) or call us at 800-932-4477 to design a session for your teachers.

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*Convention Wisdom*

## **One-Minute Clinic: Specialty Punctuation**

What is specialty punctuation? We refer to some punctuation--colons, semicolons, ellipses, and hyphens--as "specialty" because they are used far less often than common punctuation like end marks, commas, apostrophes, and quotation marks. Using these specialty punctuation marks correctly can make writing clear and precise.

Look at the sentences that follow and find the sentence that has no specialty punctuation problems. Can you identify the problems with the other sentences?

1. *At exactly 3:00 p.m., I need the following: my backpack, car keys, and directions to the rink.*
2. *Do you know the importance of December 7, 1941; June 6, 1944, and September 2, 1945?*
3. *Robert F. Kennedy once said, "Each time a man stands up for an ideal . . . or acts to improve the lot of others . . . he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope . . ."*
4. *The mayor-elect, who just turned thirty one, seems kind of self absorbed.*

See the [answer key](#) to check your answers. Download a PDF with specialty punctuation rules from our *Check Mate* student folders for [middle school](#) and [high school](#), as well as a Tip Sheet on Hyphens from our Teacher Resource Guides:

- **Level P (grades 2-3)**    [Hyphen Tip Sheet](#)
- **Level A (grades 4-6)**    [Hyphen Tip Sheet](#)
- **Level B (grades 6-9)**    [Hyphen Tip Sheet](#)
- **Level C (grades 9-12)**   [Hyphen Tip Sheet](#)

*Special Note:*

*Check Mate*, the student guide for essential conventions, can help your students with both common and specialty punctuation and other convention rules. Or try the [Essential Conventions](#) Teacher Resource Guide (\$25 for the PDF; \$30 for the hard copy). You can also download [free samplers](#) of each Teacher Resource Guide to try with your students.

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*Upcoming Events*

**Kristine Gibson in New Jersey; John Collins and Bill Atwood in Pennsylvania; Gary Chadwell in Ohio**



<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Session</i>	<i>Grades</i>	<i>Presenter</i>
1/23/18	Morris-Union Jointure Commission, New Providence, NJ	<a href="#"><u>How Did You Get That? Improving Open-Ended Responses in Mathematics</u></a>	3-12	Kristine Gibson
1/24/18	Lancaster-Lebanon IU #13, Lancaster, PA	<a href="#"><u>Collins Writing: Text- and Evidence-Based Writing (TDA, BDQ, and SAT)</u></a>	3-12	John Collins
1/25/18	CIU #10, West Decatur, PA	<a href="#"><u>Coffee with Kristine: Connect, Share, and Fine-Tune</u></a>	K-3	Kristine Gibson
1/25/18	Lincoln IU #12, New Oxford, PA	Text- and Evidence-Based Writing: TDA, BDQ, and SAT <a href="#"><u>(Details to Come)</u></a>	3-12	John Collins
1/30/18	Central Susquehanna IU, Milton, PA	<a href="#"><u>Collins Writing for Math: How Did You Get That?</u></a>	2-12	Bill Atwood
2/1/18	CIU #10, State College, PA	<a href="#"><u>Coffee with Collins (online session)</u></a>	3-12	John Collins
2/1/18	Morris-Union Jointure Commission, New Providence, NJ	<a href="#"><u>More Writing . . . Less Grading! A Manageable Approach to Writing Across the Curriculum</u></a>	K-5	Kristine Gibson
2/16/18	Lebanon, OH	<a href="#"><u>Meeting the Challenge of Ohio Literacy Standards with the Collins Writing Program</u></a>	6-12	Gary Chadwell
2/27/18	Morris-Union Jointure Commission, New Providence, NJ	<a href="#"><u>More Writing . . . Less Grading! A Manageable Approach to Writing Across the Curriculum</u></a>	6-12	Kristine Gibson
3/7/18	CIU #10, West Decatur, PA	<a href="#"><u>Meeting the Challenges of the PA Core, Sentence Building, and Essential Conventions with the Collins Writing Program ~ Day 2</u></a>	K-3	Kristine Gibson

We add new sessions to the list regularly, so if you don't see something in your area, [check back soon!](#)



# The Best of 2017

*... our readers' top picks based on clicks*

Thank you for your interest in our newsletter! Issues of *The Collins Writing Exchange* had nearly 20,000 readers in 2017, up significantly from our 2016 readership. In case you missed any editions, here are the articles that got the most reader clicks this past year. Each article appears in its original form with all the resource links and a brief introductory comment.

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## *Featured Writing Assignment*

### **Writing Tasks to Gauge Students Needs**



*This assignment appeared in the September issue as a suggested way to get to know students. But these assignments would be excellent mid-year progress assessments, too.*

With a new academic year under way, we are all trying to get a handle on our students' writing strengths and weaknesses. In some cases, we may be able to look at students' work from last school year. But an excellent way to see where students are *right now* is to have them write about a familiar topic, one that is easy for them to elaborate on.

This month's featured writing assignments can serve as valuable pre-assessment tools. No special prior knowledge is required of students, and the Focus Correction Areas (FCAs) serve as a guide for organizing and presenting their ideas. Your review of these pieces will guide you on future assignments and FCAs.

The assignments below are ready to use, complete with prewriting activities, graphic organizers, and teaching suggestions.

- [A Special Day in My Life](#) (primary grades)
- [Describing a Family Member](#) (upper elementary grades)
- [Describing a Special Place](#) (middle school)
- [A Moment in Time](#) (high school)
- ["Who Am I?" Autobiographical Sketch](#) (upper elementary through high school)

#### *Special Note:*

Teachers consistently rate in-class support as their most-valued professional development. To support your teachers' use of the program, consider having a Collins Associate demonstrate one of these assignments or model other lessons in your classrooms. To learn more about our [professional development options](#), contact us by [email](#) or at 1-800-932-4477.

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## *Research into Action*

### **Four Kinds of Writing in Math**

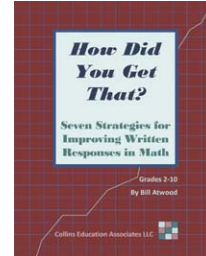
*This article from November was our most popular reference to professional literature. We love math teachers!*



In a recent article in *Teaching Children Mathematics*, authors Janine Firmender, Tutita Casa, and Madelynn Colonnese stress that it is important to have students explain and justify their mathematical ideas in writing. See the [Marshall Memo summary](#) of their article, "Write On," in which they suggest four kinds of math writing.

See Bill Atwood's suggestions for thoughtful [math writing prompts](#) from his book *How Did You Get That?* Also use the links below for ready-to-use, grade-specific Type One and Type Two prompts for math writing.

- [Grades K-3](#)
- [Grades 4-6](#)
- [Grades 7-12](#)



Available in  
Print & PDF  
Versions

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### Convention Wisdom

## One-Minute Clinic: Tricky Capitalization Rules



*We know the One-Minute Clinic is popular because we know that many readers go to the Answer Key each month to check their responses. This quiz on capitalization from last January was by far our most popular in 2017.*

Even the basics like capitalizing first words of sentences, the pronoun *I*, and names can sometimes be challenging for students. But when we get into the more subtle rules, capitalization can get really tricky. Look at the use of capitalization rules in the sentences below. Can you identify the sentence that has no capitalization mistakes? What are the problems in the other sentences?

*When my Dad told me I had an Uncle that was a high school Mathematics teacher, I was shocked.*

*It turns out Uncle Charles is actually Dr. Wallace, who teaches the Advanced Calculus II course for the math whizzes.*

*I also found out that my Uncle was the ceo of a company that does stats for MLB.*

See the [answer key](#) to check on your answers. Download a PDF from our *Essential Conventions* Teacher Resource Guide with special reminders about some of the tricky capitalization rules:

- [Level P](#) (grades 2-3)
- [Level A](#) (grades 4-6)
- [Level B](#) (grades 6-9)
- [Level C](#) (grades 9-12)

#### Special Note:

For more tips on navigating the rules of writing, see *Check Mate*, the student guide for capitalization and other essential conventions. Or order the *Essential*

Conventions Teacher Resource Guide (\$25 for the PDF version; \$30 for the hard copy) from our web store. You can also [download free Samplers](#) of each Teacher Resource Guide to try with your students.

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### Quick Links

## Build Discipline-Specific and General Academic Vocabulary with Vocabulary Cards



*This was our most popular Quick Link for 2017. Maybe that's because virtually all teachers view vocabulary development as essential.*

Teaching vocabulary terms is one of the most important activities we undertake to ensure that students grow academically. Teachers increasingly understand the importance of teaching general academic vocabulary as well as discipline-specific terms.

In their popular book *Building Academic Vocabulary*, John Marzano and Debra Pickering suggest teachers can help students internalize vocabulary by having them use cards containing a term, a definition, a student-developed non-linguistic representation, and the term used in a meaningful sentence.

We have developed lists of high-value general academic terms for both elementary and secondary students. Each word comes with a student-friendly definition and an example sentence using the word. See our [introduction to the lists](#), then use the links below to access our lists of terms and our vocabulary card template that provides your students with a tool they can use again and again to expand their vocabulary.

- [Vocabulary Card Template](#)
- [General Academic Vocabulary Terms - Grades K-2](#)
- [General Academic Vocabulary Terms - Grades 3-5](#)
- [General Academic Vocabulary Terms - Grades 6-12](#)

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### Collins In-Service

## Professional Development for Your Staff

Would you like to speak to a Collins Associate about offering a [professional development session](#) in your school or district? [Email](#) us or call us at 800-932-4477 to learn about options and pricing or to set up a FREE phone consultation. We offer highly competitive rates and will customize the training to suit your school's needs.



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### Collins Institutes

## Save PD Dollars!

Host a [Collins Institute](#) in your school or district and open it up to outside participation to underwrite some or all of the costs of the workshop.

## WHY OFFER A COLLINS WRITING PROGRAM INSTITUTE?

To earn **FREE TRAINING** for your school or district!

[Click to Learn More!](#)

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### *About Our Newsletter*

## Helpful Resources for Busy Educators

Our goal is to make our newsletter rich with ideas, research, and resources related to writing and thinking skills instruction. We hope you share *The Collins Writing Exchange* with colleagues who might be interested.

For those of you who had this issue forwarded to you, [join our mailing list](#) to receive future issues directly.

Missed a previous issue? Read it now at [The Collins Writing Exchange Archive](#), or click on a recent edition:

#### [December 2017](#)

*Opinions Matter, Shortcuts for Grading Writing, Holiday Apostrophes, and More*

#### [November 2017](#)

*LUCI, K-12 Academic Vocabulary Lists, S "T" A r t 10% Summary Organizer, Virtual Training Menu, and More*

#### [October 2017](#)

*The Book Commercial, College Essay Editing Checklist, the Power of Past Papers, and More*

#### [September 2017](#)

*Six Writing Principles, Coffee with Collins, Parents Do Matter, and More*

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