

Late Winter 2015

# The Collins Writing Exchange

Ideas, Tips, and Resources on Writing  
from  
Collins Education Associates

## Writing in Science

NGSS and CCSS Make Writing Essential for Science Instruction

*Improving Science Achievement Through Writing*



Writing is more important in science instruction than ever. That is the observation of Collins Associate, author, and national science consultant Dr. Judith Sumner. Dr. Sumner has culled an impressive [list of 46 writing expectations](#) from the National Research Council's Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Sumner also encourages teachers to be strategic with student lab reports. "Don't do a complete lab report for each lab activity," she recommends. Instead, she advises that teachers "shop around" for the most relevant elements of the report and have students focus on only those areas. "Keep the write-up to a single page!" Sumner emphasizes.

One approach to a brief but meaningful lab report is to have students write an abstract of their experience. See Sumner's [guidelines for writing an abstract](#) as well as examples of well-written abstracts.

## Classroom Tips That Work

Use Writing to Make Lessons "Magical"

Gaining and then sustaining our students' attention is critical for any lesson. That's the premise of Brian Sztabnik's terrific [article](#), "The 8 Minutes That Matter Most" from the January 5, 2015 issue of *Edutopia*. Sztabnik, an AP English teacher, says what matters most in any lesson is how we begin them and end them. He describes "eight ways to make those eight minutes magical." Not surprisingly, five of his suggestions involve writing, each one an excellent use of Collins Type One or Type Two Writing.

## Featured Writing Assignment

### Writing Ten Percent Summaries and Complex Text

Schools doing in-depth item analysis of test results in order to provide better targeted and more intensive reading instruction are unlikely to make much difference in students' test results. That's the argument Timothy Shanahan makes in his article in the November 2014 issue of *The Reading Teacher*, "How and How Not to Prepare Students for the New Tests." Shanahan cites evidence that the biggest factor in student comprehension is the complexity of the text. He suggests that instruction in specific reading skills isn't what is needed. Rather, he recommends students read rich, challenging text and then write about it.

Collins associates have been urging teachers in all subjects and grades to have students write Ten Percent Summaries of content-rich articles. Shanahan also makes a powerful case for Ten Percent Summaries: "Although writing text summaries and syntheses may not look like the tests students are being prepared for, this kind of activity should provide the most powerful and productive kind of preparation." Read an [abstract](#) of Shanahan's important article.

Get your students to read challenging text and then summarize the information with these free, easy-to-use resources:

- "Summarize to Get the Gist," an [article](#) by John Collins in *Educational Leadership Online*
- John Collins's [lesson plan](#) for the Ten Percent Summary from his book, *The Collins Writing Program: Improving Student Performance*
- Graphic organizers to help students prepare their summary:
  - [One-page organizer](#) for more experienced writers
  - [Spanish version](#) of the one-page organizer
  - [Two-page organizer](#) for less-experienced writers
- Annotated list of [free sources](#) for articles to summarize for all grade levels and disciplines

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## School Improvement

### Systematic Vocabulary Instruction

It is clear that vocabulary instruction is an emerging priority in school-wide improvement plans. In our last issue of *The Exchange*, which had a special focus on developing academic vocabulary, we provided more downloads of resources than for any previous issue. A January-February 2015 *Principal* [article](#), "When Old Becomes New: Bringing Vocabulary Instruction Back into Our Schools," makes a strong case for schools to provide direct and systematic vocabulary instruction. Author Aradhana Mudambi argues that simply having students "read widely" will not fully prepare them for the challenges of the Common Core State Standards. Students need multiple exposures to new terms through resources such as vocabulary cards and other activities. Mudambi also suggests four school-wide approaches for systematizing vocabulary instruction, along with specific action steps for each.

See the [Winter Issue](#) of *The Exchange* for lists of key academic vocabulary terms and ready-to-use vocabulary cards for grades 3-12, a popular resource with teachers.

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## Convention Wisdom

### The One-Minute Writing Clinic

"Everything needed for about 90% of the writing students do . . . appears to involve only some 44 different rules of English composition," Luella Cole Pressey wrote in a 1930 *English Journal* article. Pressey's percentage and the number of rules might be debated by educators in the Common Core era, but most agree: Some language conventions are used more than others and, therefore, are more important.

That is the idea behind our popular *Essential Conventions* resources: the Check Mate

student folders, classroom posters, and accompanying Teacher Resource Guides (TRGs). A highlight of the TRGs is the Daily Quick-Fix Sentences, which provide frequent, focused practice with the essential conventions stressed in the Check Mate folders.

Can you find the fixes needed in this example from an upper elementary exercise?

did you ever notice that every american currency bill read, This Note Is Legal Tender" on it However, their is no law that force a seller to accept it. heres a law that might surprise you, though. no living person can appears on united states currency (4 sentences/14 fixes)

Check your answers by downloading the [Essential Conventions Teacher Resource Guide Sampler Level A](#) and look at Set 17, Exercise 4. Try this and other exercises with your students.

Note: For primary grade, middle school, or high school samples, see the "Quick Links" section below.

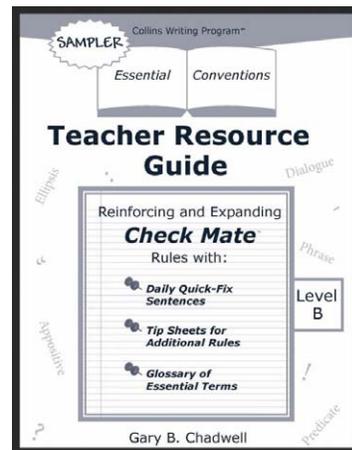
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## Quick Links

### Free, Ready-to-Use Resources

Download these free PDF files of our *Essential Conventions* Teacher Resource Guide Samplers. Each contains ready-to-use lessons and resources for your students:

[Primary](#)   [Upper Elementary](#)   [Middle](#)   [High](#)



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## Upcoming Events

### View Our Schedule, Plan a Session

We are offering public (hotel) workshops and institutes at various sites around the country. We also offer training through many regional educational service centers, such as the Morris-Union Jointure Commission (MUJC) in New Jersey and the Southeastern Regional Education Service Center (SERESC) in New Hampshire. View the [schedule](#) for upcoming sessions in your area.

New offerings are added regularly, so if you don't see something in your area, check back again soon. Don't forget that you can host a Collins Institute in your district this spring or summer, open it up to outside participation, and underwrite some or all of the cost of the workshop for your teachers.

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

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## About Our Newsletter

### Helpful Resources for Busy Educators

The feedback on our newsletter by email and at our workshops has been gratifying. Thank you for your interest and support. Please forward *The Collins Writing Exchange* to your colleagues who

might be interested.

For those of you who had this issue forwarded to you, [join our mailing list](#) and receive future issues directly. *The Exchange* is issued six times a year.

Missed a previous issue? Read it now.

[Winter 2014-2015](#)

[Fall 2014](#)

[August-September 2014](#)

[Spring-Summer 2014](#)

## Save Big!

Getting ready to order next year's student planners? Get a price quote to include our *Essential Conventions Check Mate* folders in the planner! [Email](#) us or call us at 800-932-4477.

Product Details

Grades 2 to 3, [Level P](#)

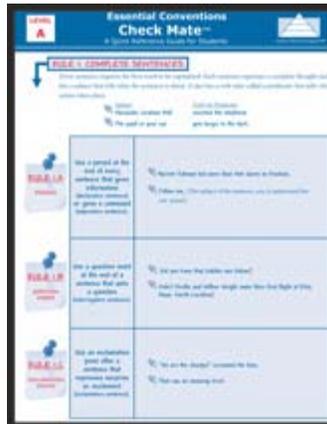
Grades 4 to 6, [Level A](#)

Grades 6 to 9, [Level B](#)

Grades 9 to 12, [Level C](#)

## Does your school or district print student planners to help keep them organized?

If so, we offer volume licenses to include *Essential Conventions Check Mate* folders in your student planners at a very affordable price.



## Contact



**COLLINS EDUCATION ASSOCIATES**

320 Main Street, PO Box 957

West Newbury, MA 01985

800-932-4477

[info@collinsed.com](mailto:info@collinsed.com)

[www.collinsed.com](http://www.collinsed.com)

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