

Survival Guide

Informational Writing with a Twist

Grades 6-12

Subject _____ Class _____ Date _____

Assignment Summary and Rationale

Informational writing is a form of nonfiction that provides factual information about a particular subject and usually answers the question *why* or *how*. For this assignment, you will not just be writing a basic “how to” guide for a simple process. Rather, you will be considering the most critical aspects of a topic, event, or experience and composing a survival guide for others who may be interested in following in your footsteps. Contrary to other “how to” assignments you may have done in the past, this composition will include thoughtful *tips* (as opposed to steps) that reflect your knowledge and expertise. The title of your piece will be “How to Survive _____.”

Note to teachers: Depending on the grade level and content area, you may choose to assign a survival guide connected to a current topic of study, or you may wish to give students the option to choose from a personal area of interest or expertise. There are a vast number of topics that work for this assignment, and you may be amazed at what students come up with on their own. However, if you or your students need inspiration, you might begin with an idea from the list below.

Areas of Personal Expertise

An afternoon at the beach
A hot day in Disney World
Summer camp or an overnight camping trip
A sleepover party
Being a teenager
Being stuck at home
Sharing a room with your sibling
Your first day with a new pet
Seventh grade
Being on a soccer team
Football practice
School lunches
Being the new kid
A long car ride
Working as a lifeguard
A day with no Wi-Fi

Content-Related Topics

Algebra I
Ellis Island
Writing a works cited page
The Spanish Inquisition
Mrs. D.'s science lab
Woodshop with Mr. Carter
Midterms
Reading To Kill a Mockingbird
Writing a persuasive essay
The Underground Railroad
Geometric proofs
Long division
Using a 3-D printer
The Battle of Gettysburg
Ms. G.'s research paper
Your first job interview

Writer's Purpose

You are writing to answer the question *how* in order to educate others on the given topic. To create interest in your topic, you may wish to add an entertaining element to your writing, but listen to your teacher's instructions so you will know if this is appropriate.

Writer's Role	You are writing as an expert on the selected topic, event, or experience.
Audience	You are writing for your peers or other people who may want to follow in your footsteps and learn from your experience or knowledge.
Form	You will create a numbered or bulleted set of survival tips, written in complete sentences with explanations and rationale for each tip.
Focus Correction Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-8 detailed tips in logical order/command + rationale • Complete sentences with varied beginnings/bulleted or numbered • 7 or more specific words or precise verbs (or 7 or more content vocabulary), underlined OR a Focus Correction Area (FCA) of your choice to further develop style or content
Procedure	<p>To help you create your survival guide, we will do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type One Writing (choose one of the following): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We will all be writing a survival guide for our current content, “How to Survive ____.” In one minute, list as many vocabulary words as you can think of (at least 6) that relate to the topic identified. ○ You will choose a personal area of expertise for your survival guide. In two minutes, make a list of topics (at least 5) that you could consider yourself an expert on. You may use the list provided for inspiration. • After writing, we will share our Type One ideas with each other, add to our lists as appropriate, and eliminate weaker or off-topic ideas. • We will look at examples of survival guides (or I will model one for you) and make note of the format and content. We will view examples of writing that demonstrate each FCA, particularly if using an FCA that builds writing style. • Using a T chart: On the left side, briefly map out each tip that you will include in your guide. On the right, note the rationale for each tip. After you have finished, compare your list with a partner and look for areas that need more detail or clarification. We may also share some items from our lists with the whole class to clarify expectations for the first draft. • Draft your survival guide, beginning with a title that clearly identifies the topic, i.e., “How to Survive ____.” • As a class, we will complete the Three Step Editing process, using volunteer papers and/or examples I have collected in past years. • Before submitting your work, you will show me that you have followed each of the FCAs (e.g., Number your tips in the margin if they are not already numbered. Label the command (C) and rationale (R) for each. Underline your specific or content vocabulary.). • Finally, you will read your writing out loud in a one-foot voice and make any changes you think will improve it. • Submit your revised survival guide, so I can provide feedback on each FCA.