Kenosha Literacy Council
Tutor Tips

March 2008

Personal Experience Writing Activity

The difference between a written composition that is great and one that is simply OK often is the amount of detail about the topic that the author includes. Beginning writers can be so focused on the technical aspects of writing—grammar, spelling, and punctuation—that they ignore description. This activity helps students develop a process that will lead to better use of description and detail.

1. Ask students to think of their favorite food and write it down.
2. Ask students to think of the ingredients in their favorite food and write them down.
3. Ask students to think about how the food is prepared and write this down.
4. Ask students to think about how the food looks, smells, sounds, and tastes.
5. Ask students to think about why the food is good for them or not good for them. Encourage them to think about how the food makes them feel, in addition to its nutritional value.
6. Have the students write a paragraph describing their food without naming it.

Contraction Concentration

Here's a ready to use game to help students review or familiarize themselves with many common contractions. It's played like the well-known game, "Concentration."

Make a set of cards, cut them apart, and shuffle them. Lay out the cards in rows, face down. The object is to find the matching pairs. Each player takes a turn and turns over two cards. If they match, keep them and take another turn. One more important rule—when you find a matched pair, you have to make a sentence with both forms of the phrase. For example, "I'm winning this game. I am winning this game."

I'm	can't	you're	I'll	you'll
I am	can not	you are	I will	you will

Adapted from Hands-On English

The Phone Book: One Thick Textbook

The phone book may not be an edge-of-your-seat thriller, but you can find a lot of good stuff inside, especially if you're trying to help students get better acquainted with the city or town where they live.

The Local Scene

Many phone books contain sections with all sorts of information about the local area. For example, you might find:

- ➔ Descriptions of points of interest, including historic sites.
- ➔ A listing of library locations.
- ➔ A city map. Practice map reading with students. Ask them to write directions for getting from one part of the city to another. Teach the spelling of street names.
- ➔ A calendar of local events.

The Nitty-Gritty

Of course, it's helpful to make sure students are well acquainted with the ordinary yet essential ways to use the phone book. You might try preparing a phone book scavenger hunt. Make a list of questions that students must go to the phone book to answer.

Charting Information

Have students make a simple chart to organize information they will gather through phone calls to businesses. Plan to have them call five local hotels. Ask students to make a grid. They should write the hotel name at the top of the first column. They can label the other columns with such headings as *Phone Number, Address, Room Cost Per Night, Checkout Time, Swimming Pool*, and *Cable TV*. As they make their phone calls, they can fill in details for each hotel. If students have an actual need for other information, they can call appropriate businesses instead of hotels.

??Questions from KLC Tutors??

Do you have a question that you'd like to see featured? Please email it to cheryl@kenoshalit.org

Q: How can I tell if a book or article is at the right level of difficulty for my student?

A: Believe it or not, the best learning takes place when 95%-97% of the words in a text can be read without difficulty. If we have to struggle with more than 5% of the words, then we can't maintain fluency and comprehension. The "three-finger" rule can help both you and your student select appropriate material. When starting a new book, students should raise one finger each time they encounter a word they cannot read. If they've raised three fingers while reading the first page or two then the book may be too difficult.