

Prompt Format

GRADE 5

Prompt # Description

Writing Situation

- The first sentence provides the background for the writing assignment and the general topic.
- The remaining sentences help writers consider different aspects of the topic, realize that they know enough about the topic to write, and focus their individual responses.

Directions for Writing

- The first sentence identifies the nature of the writing (a personal narrative essay, although this phrase is never used) and also identifies an audience.
- The remaining sentences remind students to help their audience understand their ideas by giving many examples and suggest from where those ideas might be drawn.

GRADE 5 INSTRUCTIONAL EXAMPLE PROMPTS

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Prompt 1 A Memorable Field Trip

Writing Situation

Think of a field trip you have taken while at school. Such a field trip might have included visiting a museum, a government building, an important historical site, a library, a sports complex, a large city, or a farm.

Directions for Writing

Write to a group of teachers about a field trip that you have taken. Help your audience to understand why it was important and so memorable by explaining what happened, how you felt, and why you remember it. Use sensory detail to convey your ideas and build excitement in the mind of the reader. Show your audience what happened, don't just tell them.

TEACHING TIP: Help students focus their writing on the experience of a specific visit to a specific place rather than several visits to the same place over time.

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Prompt 2 A Lightbulb Moment

Writing Situation

Think of a moment in your life when you realized you suddenly understood an idea, a skill, or a concept you had been struggling with. It could have been something related to school like learning to read, a specific athletic skill you were trying to master like riding a bike, learning to perform a household chore, or an idea that you could suddenly apply to your own life.

Directions for Writing

Write to a group of adults about such a moment in your life. Help your audience appreciate how it felt to struggle and then suddenly understand by explaining what happened, the skill or idea you were trying to master, why you remember it, and why it was important. Use sensory detail to convey your ideas and build excitement in the mind of the reader. Show your audience what happened, don't just tell them.

TEACHING TIP: Help students focus their writing on the experience that led to changes in their thoughts and/or feelings at a particular/specific moment of their lives rather than ongoing experiences or experiences that took place over extended periods of time.

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Prompt 3 A Memorable Teacher

Writing Situation

Think of a memorable teacher from your past. Remember an experience from his or her classroom. Such experiences might include a great lesson, a time when the teacher helped you through a problem, or a new way of helping you learn.

Directions for Writing

Write to a group of parents about a memorable teacher in your life. Help your audience to understand why that teacher was important and so memorable by explaining what happened, how you felt, and why you remember it. Use sensory

detail to convey your ideas and build excitement in the mind of the reader. Show your audience what happened, don't just tell them.

TEACHING TIP: Help students practice the “show don't tell” advice in their writing.

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Prompt 4 Ritual-like Experiences

Writing Situation

Think of certain experiences that you may repeat so often they become almost personal rituals. Such events might include trips to the ice cream shop on summer evenings, or buying new clothes for school every August, attending a religious event, or visiting a favorite place time and time again.

Directions for Writing

Write to a group of adults about an almost ritual-like experience in your life. Help your audience to understand why that experience is important to you and why you repeat it so often by explaining what happened, how you felt, and why you remember it. Use sensory detail to convey your ideas and build excitement in the mind of the reader. Show your audience what happened, don't just tell them.

TEACHING TIP: Help students better understand the prompt by discussing the meaning of “rituals” and brainstorming examples as a class.

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Prompt 5 A Performance

Writing Situation

You may remember performing before a group of people. Such an experience might include telling a story, performing in a skit or play, making a class presentation, or taking part in a musical performance (singing, dancing, acting, playing a musical instrument, etc.).

Directions for Writing

Write to a group of adults about such a moment in your life. Help your audience to understand how it was important by explaining what happened, how you felt, and why you remember it. Use sensory detail to convey your experience and feelings. Show your audience what happened, don't just tell them.

TEACHING TIP: Help students to deconstruct this prompt by identifying the elements included from the “prompt format” box on the first page.

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Prompt 6 An Important Accomplishment

Writing Situation

Think of an accomplishment in your life. Such an event might include doing particularly well on a test, earning an award, learning a new language, training a pet, winning a trophy, or learning to swim.

Directions for Writing

Write to a group of adults about an accomplishment in your life. Help your audience to understand the importance of this achievement by explaining what happened, what you accomplished, how you felt, and why you remember it. Use sensory detail to convey your ideas and excitement to the reader. Show your audience what happened, don't just tell them.

TEACHING TIP: Help students practice brainstorming for specific elements of sensory detail that could be incorporated into their writing for each of the locations where such accomplishments might take place: a classroom, a concert hall, a swimming pool, a football stadium, etc.

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Prompt 7 The Good and the Bad

Writing Situation

Think about an event in your life that started out bad but turned into something good. Such events might include learning to use a computer while waiting for a broken leg to heal, or reading a great book on a rainy day that kept you from going outside, getting used to one or more new family members (step-parent, step-brother or step-sister, new baby), or an activity that you were dreading that actually proved to be quite fun.

Directions for Writing

Write to a group of adults about such an event in your life. Help your audience understand how an event that seemed negative turned out to have positive consequences by explaining what happened, why you remember it, and why it was important. Use sensory detail to convey your ideas and build excitement in the mind of the reader. Show your audience what happened, don't just tell them.

TEACHING TIP: Help students better understand this prompt by brainstorming as a class examples of personal experiences that first seemed negative but became positive.

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Prompt 8 Help When You Needed It

Writing Situation

Think of a time when you needed help and someone else came to your assistance. Such a time might include struggling with a school project, being injured in an accident, being rescued, or a conflict with another person.

Directions for Writing

Write to a group of parents about such an experience. Identify the person who assisted you. Help your audience to understand the importance of this event and the assistance you received. Explain what happened, how you felt, why you remember it, and what you learned from it. Use sensory detail to convey your ideas and build excitement in the mind of the reader. Show your audience what happened, don't just tell them.

TEACHING TIP: Help students to explore the concept of audience awareness by discussing how an essay written on this topic to parents might be different from similar essays written to friends, or teachers, or other adults.

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Prompt 9 A Surprising Moment

Writing Situation

Do you remember an event that surprised you in a good or bad way? Such events might include winning a contest, losing an important game, receiving a birthday gift, or taking a family trip.

Directions for Writing

Write to a group of adults about such a moment in your life. Help your audience to understand how it was important and surprising by explaining what happened, how surprised you felt, and why you remember it. Use sensory detail to convey your ideas and build excitement in the mind of the reader. Show your audience what happened, don't just tell them.

TEACHING TIP: Help students to explore the importance of building excitement in the reader by examining different methods for structuring the sequence of their story and for incorporating tension and suspense. Discuss the potential effects these different methods might have on the story.
