

**Module: Writing**

**Lesson Title: Using Evidence to Support Point of View or Opinions**

**Objectives and Standards**

Students will:

- Recognize the importance of supporting opinions with evidence
- Use a What-Why-How strategy to express an opinion with evidence
- Understand that effective writing must include evidence that support an opinion or point of view

Florida Adult Basic Education Reading Standards	Level Expectation
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (CCR.WR.ABE.1)	NRS Level 3 – Write opinion pieces on topics or text supporting a point of view with reasons and information

**Materials**

- Handout A: What-Why-How Chart
- Handout B: What-Why-How Chart for Reading Complex Text
- Sample nonfiction text in the area of social studies or science

**Instructional Plan**

*Overview*

Most Adult Basic Education students have difficulty in writing irrespective of whether they are writing an argument or an opinion piece. These students often give opinions and reasons for what they think, but fail to go to the next step which is to provide evidence that explains how they know their reasoning is correct.

This lesson is designed to provide students with a strategy that they can use to develop effective opinion pieces based on given topics or on texts that they have read.

*Process*

Prior to the lesson, you may wish to draw a What-Why-How chart on the board. Identify a few topics with which students would be familiar to open the lesson, such as:

- My favorite grocery store
- My favorite movie or television show
- My favorite place to shop for clothes

As you open the lesson, provide a topic with which students can immediately connect. In this case, learning how to support their opinion about a topic that is well known to them is the first step toward understanding the necessity for including accurate and appropriate evidence when writing.

Ask students if they have ever tried to explain something to someone and that person just didn't seem to understand what you were trying to say. For example, have you ever tried to explain why you like a particular actor in a television show or movie? Discuss with students how they would go about explaining why that actor is so special to them. Students might include reasons such as:

- He has a great voice.
- She looks great.
- She wears the most amazing clothes.
- He makes me laugh.

Explain that while all of these might be reasons, they don't tell the entire story. When you say he has a great voice, what do you mean? Is it a deep bass or a more subdued tenor? Does he have a great rolling laugh or a shy smile? What makes her clothes so amazing? Does she wear bold colors or black and white? Explain that each of these questions can be answered with evidence.

Explain that students are going to learn how to use a What-Why-How strategy to help them remember to include evidence when they write. Distribute a copy of **Handout A: What-Why-How Chart** to each student. Discuss the key elements of the What-Why-How strategy, by using the following information.

- What do you think? This is your opinion. If you are writing an argument, this would be your thesis statement.
- Why do you think it? There are always reasons for your opinions even though you may not think so. If you are going to convince anyone of your opinion you have to have strong reasons for that opinion.
- How do you know? You can have an opinion, but that opinion better be backed up with evidence if you are going to convince anyone that your opinion is correct. For every reason, you should have at least one example or other kind of evidence.

Ask students to identify their favorite grocery store. Write their responses on the board. If more than one grocery store is given, take a vote and select just one for the purposes of this activity. Have students tell you why they picked that particular grocery store. Write their reasons on the board, but not in the chart at this point. Have students review their reasons and pick the top four and write those in the chart. Your chart may look similar to the following:

What?	Why?	How?
Publix, Walmart, Fresh Market, Whole Foods, Winn Dixie (Select one)	It's clean.	
	It has great prices.	
	There is a good selection of produce.	
	They provide free samples of new products.	

At this point, take each of the “why” responses and have students brainstorm evidence that would explain “how” they know it is clean or has great prices. Include all of the students’ responses in the chart, as shown below.

What?	Why?	How?
Publix, Walmart, Fresh Market, Whole Foods, Winn Dixie (Select one)	It’s clean.	Floors are shiny. Smells great. Someone is always mopping or dusting shelves. There are no crumbs or sticky stuff on the floor
	It has great prices.	Special sales each week 2 for 1 prices on store brands Double coupons on Thursday Less expensive than store x.
	There is a good selection of produce.	They have lots of different types of lettuce. They have great fresh produce from local farms. They have nine different varieties of apples.
	They provide free samples of new products.	Weekend samples at the end of each aisle. Tried the samples myself.

When students have exhausted their lists of evidence for each reason, have them take a look at the entire chart. Ask if there are any additional pieces of evidence that they want to include. If not, ask students if there is anything that is not clear in the evidence or could be stated in a different way. Working as a class, make any necessary adjustments to the evidence.

Start with the first reason the store was selected – It’s clean. Look at the evidence that is included in the “How” column. As a group, construct a few sentences or paragraph that explains the first reason you selected the grocery store.

Response may look similar to the following.

*Publix is a very clean grocery store. It always smells nice and the floors are shiny and clean. When I walk in the store, I always see someone mopping the floor or dusting and straightening the shelves. There are never crumbs or sticky soda on the floor like you see in other grocery stores.*

Continue guided practice by having students write their own paragraphs for the next three reasons. Emphasize the importance of providing evidence for their reasons and explaining “how” the evidence supports their claim (reason). Have students share their responses with the rest of the class.

Explain that a What-Why-How chart can be used for writing or to help you better understand what you are reading. The key is to look for evidence – the “how” part of the chart.

#### *Sample Debriefing Questions*

- Did the What-Why-How chart make you think more closely about your opinion?
- How could you use this chart when reading?
- How can you use this strategy to help you become a more effective writer?

#### **Modifications for Different Levels**

This strategy for using evidence to support opinions works well with students at all levels. For lower level students, you may need to write their paragraphs using their thoughts rather than have them write the paragraphs independently. However, students should have no problem in working with the chart as long as the topic selected is something to which they can easily relate.

At a more complex level, have students use the chart as a tool for reading. Provide students with a nonfiction text, such as the one provided on **Handout B: What-Why-How Chart for Reading Complex Text** and have them complete the chart based on what they read. In this case, students must give the author’s point of view or opinion, the reasons for the author’s opinion, and the evidence found within the text to support that opinion.

#### **Assessments/Extensions**

Ask students if they have ever had to produce a resume or a letter of application for a job. Ask them if they found that to be a challenging task. If yes, solicit the reasons why they found it difficult. Their reasons may include that they didn’t know what to write or they were afraid that what they wrote would sound “dumb” or even wrong.

Explain that the assessment for this lesson is going to provide them with a resource they can use when faced with filling out a job application or submitting a resume.

Distribute copies of Handout A to all students. Have them write the following statement in the “What” column: I am the best person for this position with your company. Have students complete the chart by including at least three reasons and two to three examples/evidence that supports each reason. Review the students’ charts when completed. Address any issues or concerns, especially if there are areas where the student has included little if any evidence to support one or more of the reasons stated.

At this point, the student should be able to take the information and create a cover letter or a short summary for inclusion on a job application.

**Handout A: What-Why-How Chart**

<b>What</b>	<b>Why</b>	<b>How</b>
What do you think? (This is your opinion.)	Why do you think it? (These are your reasons.)	How do you know? (This is your evidence.)

**Handout B: What-Why-How Chart for Reading Complex Text**

<b>What</b>	<b>Why</b>	<b>How</b>
What does the author think?	Why does the author think this way?	What evidence did the author provide?