

CER Writing Strategy

Type of Writing Supported:

Perusasive & Argumentative

Grade Level: **Grades 6-8**
Middle School

Stage of Writing Supported:
Planning and Drafting

PURPOSE:

What does this strategy help students do?

CER helps students make a claim, support it with evidence, and explain their reasoning to write clear, persuasive arguments across subjects.

Why is this strategy effective?

CER breaks down complex writing into manageable steps, encouraging students to support their ideas with facts and explain how the evidence connects to the claim. This fosters deeper understanding and strengthens argumentation skills.

C

Claim

What is your main point or answer?

E

Evidence

What facts or data support your claim?

R

Reasoning

How does your evidence support your claim and why does it matter?

TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

How to Introduce:

- Start with a question: “Ever tried convincing someone?” (like asking for a later bedtime or a rule change)
- Explain: CER helps you write strong arguments—make a point, support it with facts, and explain why it matters

Scaffolding:

- Give students a CER chart with prompts: Claim (your belief), Evidence (supporting facts), Reasoning (why it matters)
- Offer sentence starters: “I believe that...”, “According to...”, “This shows that...”

Practice Ideas:

- Use fun, low-stakes prompts to build confidence (e.g., pizza every day, summer vs. winter).
- Apply CER in real subjects like science, social studies, and ELA.
- Support all learners with visuals, flexible formats, peer sharing, and revision tools.

DO'S

- ✓ Teach claim, evidence, reasoning explicitly
- ✓ Use guiding questions for each CER part
- ✓ Model CER with think-alouds and simple examples
- ✓ Use graphic organizers to separate CER elements
- ✓ Provide exemplars and revision chances

DON'TS

- ✗ Don't skip the reasoning.
- ✗ Don't assume evidence-claims are obvious
- ✗ Don't treat CER as one-and-done.
- ✗ Don't start with complex topics.
- ✗ Don't do the reasoning for them.

✓ Teach CER components explicitly

- Define claim, evidence, and reasoning clearly
- Show how reasoning connects evidence to the claim

✓ Use guiding questions to scaffold thinking

- Claim: What do you believe?
- Evidence: What facts support your belief?
- Reasoning: Why do those facts matter?

✓ Model CER with think-alouds

- Use simple, relatable examples before introducing academic content
- Verbalize your thought process to show how CER works

✓ Provide sentence starters for structure

- "I believe that..."
- "According to the article..."
- "This shows that..."

✓ Use graphic organizers to separate CER parts

- Help students plan each component clearly
- Reinforce structure and organization

✓ Integrate CER across subjects

- Apply CER in science, social studies, and ELA
- Reinforce its relevance and transferability

✓ Support brainstorming before writing

- Allow verbal or visual idea generation
- Scaffold for diverse learners and reduce writing anxiety

✓ Provide exemplars and revision opportunities

- Show strong and weak examples
- Emphasize clarity, logic, and improvement over time

✓ Encourage peer discussion and collaboration

- Let students talk through their reasoning
- Use partners or small groups to refine ideas

✗ Don't skip the reasoning step

- Students often struggle here
- Reasoning is key to logical thinking

✗ Don't assume evidence-claim connections are obvious

- Teach how to link evidence to claims
- Practice this skill explicitly

✗ Don't treat CER as a one-time lesson

- Revisit and reinforce CER regularly
- Build mastery over time

✗ Don't start with complex topics

- Use low-stakes, accessible prompts first
- Build student confidence gradually

✗ Don't provide evidence without context

- Explain where evidence comes from
- Clarify why it's relevant to the claim

✗ Don't correct reasoning without discussion

- Use guiding questions to prompt reflection
- Help students refine their logic collaboratively

✗ Don't expect CER writing without planning

- Use organizers and discussion before writing
- Support structured thinking

✗ Don't do the reasoning for them

- Offer prompts and scaffolds
- Let students articulate their own logic

CER Strategy: Tips for Implementation

Step	Instructional Focus	Supporting Details
Step 1: Introduce the Strategy	Hook students with relatable examples	Ask: "Have you ever tried to convince someone of something?" (e.g., bedtime, team rules)
	Explain CER's purpose	CER helps students make strong arguments by stating a claim, backing it with evidence, and explaining why it matters
Step 2: Model the Strategy	Use a think-aloud with a simple topic	<i>Example:</i> "Recess should be longer"
	Walk through CER steps	<i>Claim:</i> Recess should be longer <i>Evidence:</i> Physical activity improves focus <i>Reasoning:</i> Better focus leads to better academic performance
	Show how to write it out	Turn the CER into a full paragraph
Step 3: Scaffold Student Practice	Provide a graphic organizer	Use prompts: <i>Claim:</i> What do you believe? <i>Evidence:</i> What facts support your belief? <i>Reasoning:</i> Why do those facts matter?
	Offer sentence starters	"I believe that..." "According to..." "This shows that..."
Step 4: Practice with Low-Stakes Topics	Use fun, accessible prompts	Examples: "Why should pizza be served every day?" "Why is summer better than winter?"
	Encourage brainstorming	Let students discuss ideas in pairs before writing
Step 5: Build Toward Content Integration	Apply CER across subjects	<i>Science:</i> Explain a phenomenon <i>Social Studies:</i> Defend a historical decision <i>ELA:</i> Analyze a character's actions
Step 6: Support Diverse Learners	Use visual aids	Draw icons for claim, evidence, reasoning
	Allow alternative formats	Let students draw or speak ideas before writing
	Encourage peer support	Use think-pair-share or small group writing
Step 7: Provide Feedback and Revise	Use exemplars	Show before-and-after samples of CER writing
	Facilitate peer review	Teach students to check for clear claims, strong evidence, and logical reasoning
	Hold mini-conferences	Meet with students to clarify and refine ideas
Group or Independent Practice Ideas	Make it fun or meaningful	Group project: Write persuasive paragraphs to submit to school administrators.
		"Silly" topics: Ice cream as a main dish, Crocs as a health risk, fines for silent letters in spelling.

Publication Details

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What is the Writing Classroom?

The Writing Classroom was developed to help educators apply effective, evidence-based writing interventions. Originating at the University of Kansas with funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, this initiative supports instructional strategies for all students, especially those who struggle with writing.

What is AI SCORE?

AI-SCORE enhances writing competency for students with learning disabilities by:

- Integrating evidence-based instructional strategies
- Providing immediate AI-generated feedback
- Personalizing the writing process to improve outcomes

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Learn More

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Disclaimer: The contents of this publication were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education #H327F20008. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, Anita Vermeer.