

# Hamburger Writing Strategy

Type of Writing Supported:  
**Persuasive, Narrative, Informational**

Grade Level: **Grades 2-6**

Stage of Writing Supported:  
**Planning and Drafting**

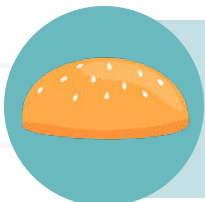
## PURPOSE:

### What does this strategy help students do?

The hamburger paragraph strategy helps students organize their ideas, evaluate topic focus, and strengthen weak content. It also guides them in building well-structured, detailed paragraphs using a clear visual model.

### Why is this strategy effective?

This strategy is effective because it uses a familiar visual to make paragraph structure memorable and manageable. It helps students break writing into clear parts and build confidence by showing how much detail makes a strong, "juicy" paragraph.



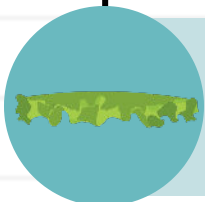
## Main Idea

What is the main idea I want to share?



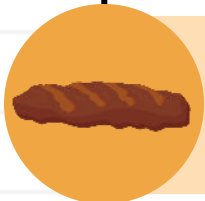
## Juicy Detail 1

What detail, fact, or example do I want to share that supports my main idea?



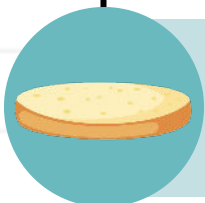
## Juicy Detail 2

What is another detail, fact, or example that I want to share that supports my main idea?



## Juicy Detail 3

What is one more detail, fact, or example that I want to share that supports my main idea?



## Bottom Bun

How can I wrap up the paragraph clearly?

# Hamburger Strategy: Case study

**Who is using it:** teacher and students

**Classroom context:** a 5th-grade language arts class writing an informative paragraph about an animal of choice

## How the strategy is implemented

- Ms. Lopez began by showing her students a plush toy hamburger with removable layers (top bun, lettuce, cheese, patty, bottom bun). She held up the hamburger and explained, “Each part of this burger helps hold it together just like sentences in a paragraph!”
- Ms. Lopez read aloud a sample paragraph and touched each part of the hamburger to identify the corresponding sentence in the writing. Simultaneously, students read the same paragraph and highlighted the different parts of the printed sample with three different colors to signify the topic sentence, details, and concluding sentence.
- After building an understanding of the hamburger metaphor, Ms. Lopez posted a blank graphic organizer of a hamburger to write her own informative paragraph about cats. She modeled by thinking aloud through each part of the hamburger:
  - “I need to start with my top bun. Hmm...what’s my main idea? Cats are impressive creatures.”
  - “Now for my first filling. Let me give an example: To begin with, they are clean animals and even use a litter box without needing to be taught.”
  - “I like that detail. Now I need to think of another juicy detail that’s different from the first one. I know! Cats are also very independent, so they don’t need constant attention but still love to cuddle.”
  - “Now, I need one more detail that is different than my first two. I’ll add: They can be playful, quiet, and even help reduce stress just by purring.”
  - “Now I must add my bottom bun. I need to reference back to my main idea, which is that cats are impressive creatures. I think I’ll add: Without a doubt, cats’ sweet and independent nature makes them fantastic animals.”
- After sharing her cat example, Ms. Lopez color-coded her work to reinforce the three different parts of the strategy - the top bun, fillings, and bottom bun.
- Ms. Lopez then distributed hamburger graphic organizers to each student. She reminded them it was their job to write a paragraph about an animal they were knowledgeable about. As students began writing with the cat visual up on the board as a model, Ms. Lopez circulated, providing support through guiding questions and reinforcement of the strategy.

# Hamburger Strategy: Case study

- For struggling students, Ms. Lopez used many strategies.
  - If students were struggling to get started, she asked them to reexplain the hamburger writing strategy in their own words to look for misconceptions in their understanding. She reexplained the visual for students who struggled to restate the steps and provided them with a step-by-step checklist to complete the organizer to get them started with brainstorming.
  - If students wrote vague details or multiple similar details, Ms. Lopez reminded students that just like burgers need a variety of toppings, paragraphs need a variety of different details. She talked through similar details with students and helped them brainstorm a new idea that supported the topic.
- What outcomes or student responses result from using the strategy
  - Ms. Lopez noticed that students remembered the parts of the paragraph and “what goes where” by referencing the hamburger metaphor
  - Students followed a more uniform structure when writing
  - Students became more critical of writing three unique details, all representative of a different hamburger filling, rather than writing vague or similar details

# Hamburger Strategy: Troubleshooting & Adaptations

Issue/Challenge	What to Do	Helpful Prompts
<b>Topic sentence is vague</b>	Review examples, ask for more specific ideas	“What is your paragraph really about?”
<b>Repetition in details</b>	Use sentence stems to expand ideas	“Can you add a new fact that’s different?”
<b>No conclusion</b>	Model wrap-up sentences with the class	“What’s a final thought to leave your reader with?”

## Ideas to further differentiate

- Increasing Visual and Tactile support - Provide students with a 3D hamburger model or felt cutouts for hands-on assembly of the paragraph parts. Additionally, you could offer an illustrated graphic organizer with pictures of the parts of each burger with space for writing underneath.
- Support-Embedded Graphic Organizers - Add in additional writing supports straight into the graphic organizer. For example, rather than just including the guiding question for the first filling, add in two choices for a good transition word to begin that sentence with.

# The Writing Classroom Strategies Series

# Publication Details

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## Learn More

 [WritingClassroom.org](https://WritingClassroom.org)

 [ProjectAIScore.org](https://ProjectAIScore.org)

 [KUCRL.KU.edu/aplm-online](https://KUCRL.KU.edu/aplm-online)

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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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