

TIDE Writing Strategy

Type of Writing Supported:

Informational

Grade Level: **Grades 3-8**

Elementary to Middle School

Stage of Writing Supported:

Planning and Drafting

PURPOSE:

What does this strategy help students do?

TIDE is a planning and writing strategy that helps students organize informative/expository paragraphs.

Why is this strategy effective?

- Write clear, effective expository paragraphs.
- Learn key parts of strong paragraph writing.
- Build writing confidence and independence.
- See paragraph construction as simple, repeatable steps.

T

Topic Sentence

What is the main idea of this paragraph?

I

Important Evidence

What is one important reason or fact that supports my topic?

D

Detailed Explanation

How can I explain or give an example of this reason?

E

Ending Sentence

How can I wrap up or restate the main idea?

TIDE Strategy: Case study

Using the TIDE Strategy to Strengthen Evidence-Based Writing in 7th Grade

Teacher: Mr. Harris

Subject: 7th Grade English Language Arts

School: Westside Middle School

Student Profile: Mixed-ability group with a large portion reading below grade level and several English learners

The Problem

Mr. Harris noticed a consistent issue in his seventh-grade students' writing: while most students were able to state a main idea or opinion in a topic sentence, they struggled to include strong evidence and often assumed that the reader would "just understand" how their facts or examples related to their point.

He would read paragraphs like:

"Dogs are good pets. They are fun to be around. That's why people like them."

There was little elaboration, and most students skipped any explanation. When asked, they often said things like, "Well, it's obvious," or "I thought it made sense."

Mr. Harris realized his students needed a clear structure to help them:

1. Provide relevant and meaningful support.
2. Explain how their support connects to their topic.

Choosing the TIDE Strategy

After researching strategies for struggling writers and attending a professional development session on paragraph writing, Mr. Harris decided to implement the TIDE strategy (Topic, Important evidence, Detailed explanation, Ending sentence).

He appreciated that TIDE not only reminded students to include evidence but also emphasized the need for explanation, which was exactly what his students were missing. He also liked that it provided a repeatable process students could internalize over time.

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Implementation Over One Week

Day 1: Introducing the Problem and the Strategy

Mr. Harris opened class by projecting three short student-written paragraphs on the screen (names removed). He read them aloud and asked the class:

"What do these writers do well? What seems unclear?"

Students responded:

- "They all have a topic sentence."
- "Some are too short."
- "That one says 'it's important' but doesn't say why."

Mr. Harris built on that: "Exactly. You all have great ideas, but sometimes you stop too soon. You give a fact or an example, but you don't tell the reader why it matters."

He introduced the TIDE structure using a color-coded poster:

- T: Topic Sentence
- I: Important Evidence or Example
- D: Detailed Explanation
- E: Ending Sentence

He passed out a blank TIDE graphic organizer and showed a completed example on the board. Then, he modeled a think-aloud paragraph on the topic: "Should middle school students get more free time during the school day?"

He wrote and narrated:

- T: "Middle school students should get more breaks during the day."
- I: "Research shows that students focus better after taking short brain breaks."
- D: "When kids have time to move or relax, they come back to class more ready to learn. This helps them stay on task and do better academically."
- E: "This is why longer or more frequent breaks would benefit students."

He asked students to label the T, I, D, and E in his paragraph.

Day 2: Guided Practice with Sentence Starters

Mr. Harris began the class with a quick review of TIDE. Students chorused the steps aloud.

He passed out sentence starters for each section:

- T: One reason..., In this paragraph, I will explain...
- I: For example..., According to the article...
- D: This shows that..., This means..., This helps explain...
- E: That is why..., In conclusion...

Working in pairs, students were given a shared topic sentence: "Recycling is important in our community."

Together, they completed the I, D, and E on a graphic organizer using articles provided. Mr. Harris walked around, prompting with questions like:

- "How does this fact connect to your topic?"
- "Can you explain why this example matters?"

Then, they read their work aloud to another pair and received quick feedback.

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TIDE Strategy: Case study

Day 3: Independent Practice with Scaffolded Support

Students selected from three familiar prompts:

- Why teamwork is important in PE
- Why reading fiction helps your imagination
- Why digital citizenship matters in school

Before writing full paragraphs, students had to fill out the TIDE organizer completely. Mr. Harris provided highlighters so they could color-code each part after drafting.

As students worked independently, he conferenced with individuals:

- "Tell me more about your example. Why did you choose that one?"
- "You have a strong I, but your D is missing. Can you explain the connection?"

Some students used the sentence starters from Day 2 as support.

Day 4: Peer Review with the TIDE Checklist

Mr. Harris gave each student a TIDE checklist with guiding questions:

- Does the paragraph start with a clear topic sentence?
- Is there a piece of important evidence or a strong example?
- Does the writer explain why that evidence matters?
- Does the ending sentence wrap up the paragraph effectively?

Students traded paragraphs with a partner. Each used a different color highlighter to mark each part of TIDE.

Pairs had short conferences:

- "I saw your evidence, but I think you could say more about how it connects."
- "Your ending is strong—it ties back to your topic."

Mr. Harris reminded students that revision is part of real writing and celebrated thoughtful feedback.

Day 5: Revision and Reflection

Students used their peer feedback and checklists to revise their paragraphs. Mr. Harris encouraged them to read aloud and listen for flow.

Once revised, they underlined their D sentences (detailed explanation) to ensure that they weren't just repeating the evidence but explaining it.

In the final ten minutes, students responded to a reflection prompt:

- What part of writing a TIDE paragraph is easiest for you?
- What part is hardest?
- How does explaining your evidence help your reader?

Sample student responses:

"Coming up with a topic is easy, but explaining is hard. I'm learning to say why the fact matters."

"I used to just list facts, but now I explain them. That makes my writing better."

TIDE Strategy: Case study

Outcome

By the end of the week, Mr. Harris saw noticeable improvement in students' writing. Their paragraphs had clearer structure, more complete thoughts, and—most importantly—students were explaining their evidence rather than assuming their audience would just "get it."

Post-assessments showed that:

- 80% of students included both evidence and explanation in their writing (compared to 35% at the start).
- Students who previously wrote short, vague responses produced more developed paragraphs using the TIDE graphic organizer.

In classroom discussions, students even started referring to the parts of the TIDE model:

- "I forgot to add my D part!"
- "This is a good example, but I need to explain it more."

Mr. Harris continued to use TIDE throughout the semester and collaborated with content area teachers to share the strategy. Over time, students began applying the structure independently across subjects.

TIDE Strategy: Troubleshooting

| TIDE Step | Issue/Challenge | What to Do | Helpful Prompts |
|--------------------|---|--|--|
| Topic Sentence | Students write a vague or general topic sentence. | Teach sentence starters and provide models of clear, focused topic sentences. | "What is the main point you want to prove?" "Try starting with: One reason... or A main idea is..." |
| | Students skip the topic sentence completely. | Use visual organizers and highlight the first line to reinforce its purpose. | "What should your reader know right away?" "Can you start by stating your opinion or idea?" |
| | Topic sentence does not match the rest of the paragraph. | Practice matching topic sentences with supporting evidence using cut-and-paste or matching activities. | "Does your evidence actually prove your topic?" "Is your first sentence connected to your example?" |
| Important Evidence | Students use weak or off-topic evidence. | Teach students to ask: "Does this help prove my point?" and model strong vs. weak examples. | "How does this support your topic sentence?" "Is this your best evidence?" |
| | Students struggle to find or recall evidence. | Offer a class list of sentence starters and possible examples based on texts or personal experiences. | "What happened in the story/text that fits this idea?" "Can you think of a time in the reading when you knew your topic sentence was true?" |
| | Students repeat the topic instead of adding support. | Show how evidence adds something new, not just restates. Model expanding with specific details or facts. | "What is a fact, detail, or example that shows this is true?" |

TIDE Strategy: Troubleshooting

| TIDE Step | Issue/Challenge | What to Do | Helpful Prompts |
|----------------------|---|--|--|
| Detailed Explanation | Students skip the explanation altogether. | Make explaining a must-do step. Use color coding or sentence frames to show what an explanation looks like. | "Now say why that example matters." "What does this prove?" |
| | Students confuse evidence with explanation. | Break down examples and explain them aloud together. Highlight the difference between what happened and why it matters. | "You gave an example. Now tell me why it is important." |
| | Explanations are too short or vague. | Prompt with guiding questions and allow pair-sharing to build ideas. | "How does this show your point?" "What would a reader need to understand your thinking?" |
| Ending Sentence | Students end too abruptly or with an off-topic idea. | Teach that the ending sentence should connect back to the topic. Use sentence starters to guide focus. | "What do you want the reader to remember?" "Try starting with: This shows that..." |
| | Ending sentence repeats the topic word-for-word. | Practice rewriting topic sentences in new ways. Model paraphrasing using synonyms and new word order or sentence structures. | "How can you say this idea differently?" "Can you sum it up in your own words?" |
| | Students forget to include an ending sentence. | Have students check off each step in a graphic organizer before writing. | "Have you wrapped up your paragraph?" "What is the final thing you want to say about your point?" |

Publication Details

Contributors

Writing Classroom Development Team

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

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

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