

**GOLD EDITION**

# **PRACTICE COACH**™ **PLUS**



**English Language Arts**

**4**



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# Writing Informational Texts



## Coached Instruction

Writing an informational essay involves using specific structures to provide information to the reader. Review these three structures.

### ► Writing a Topic Sentence

Read the paragraph.

Alligators have long bodies and short legs. Their feet are webbed, which helps them swim. Alligators are fierce hunters that eat only meat.

#### Discuss

What do the factual details give information about?



#### Apply

Write a topic sentence for this paragraph.



**Think It Through** The factual details in the paragraph tell about the structure of an alligator's body and what it eats. I'll think about these facts to write a topic sentence that clearly tells readers what the paragraph will be about.

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## ► Writing Supporting Details

Read the paragraph.

A food chain shows how living things get and use energy. Simple food chains exist in our own backyards. The grass uses the sun's energy to make food. A bird eats grass from the lawn. Then your neighbor's cat eats the bird. Most cats eat fish. That's a food chain!

### Discuss

What is the main idea of the paragraph?



### Apply

Reread the paragraph. Circle the one detail that does NOT support the topic sentence of the paragraph. Write two factual details that do support the topic sentence.

**Think It Through** I know that the main idea of the paragraph is how a food chain works. The author explains it by giving an example of a backyard food chain that links the sun, grass, a bird, and a cat. I'll find the sentence that doesn't relate to this idea. The other details will support the topic sentence.

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# Lesson Practice | Part 1

Use the Writing Guide to help you understand the passage.

## Writing Guide

- The title of the passage gives you an idea about what the passage will be about.
- The writer points out the example of getting a cat or a fish and uses the linking words *for example*.
- Words such as *exercise* and *diet* are appropriate for this topic.

## Owning a Pet

Many families own pets and enjoy caring for them. The responsibilities of owning a pet are often shared by children and parents. There are some things to keep in mind when you open up your heart and home to a new pet.

First, decide what kind of pet to get. If you live in a small apartment, a large dog that needs room to run around is not the best choice. Dogs need to go on walks. If this is a job that you cannot commit to, then a pet that does not need walking would be better for your lifestyle. For example, a cat, a hamster, or fish are possibilities.

In order for a pet to stay healthy, it needs to get enough exercise. Pets also need the right kind and right amount of food. An animal's diet is usually also based on how large, how active, and how old it is. The wrong diet can make a pet overweight, lazy, or sick.

Most people agree that owning a pet involves a lot of work. But if you ask any pet owners, they will say it is well worth it!

What is the main idea of this informational text?

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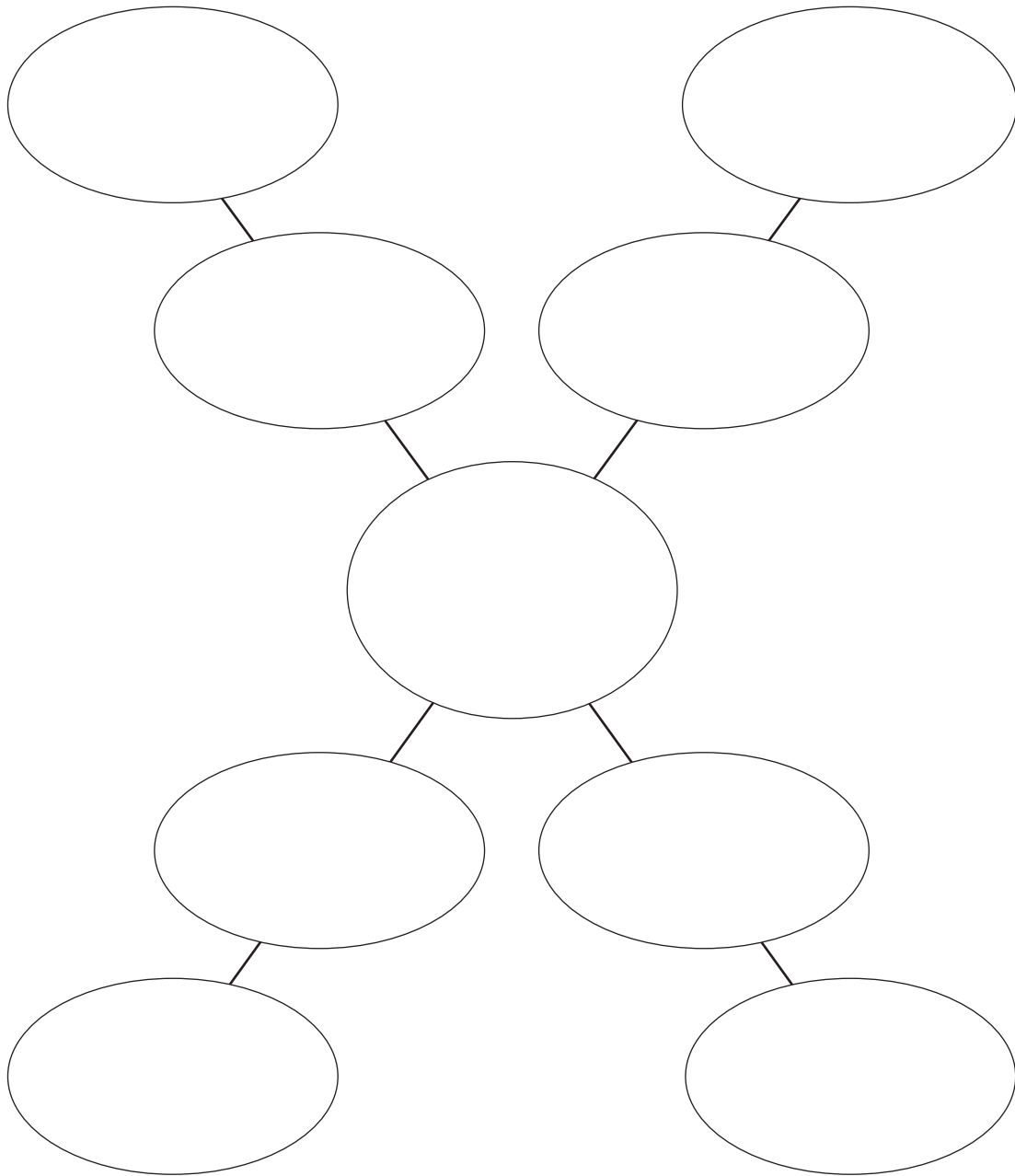
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*HINT* Look for the topic sentence at the beginning of the passage.

## Plan Your Writing

Read the writing prompt, and then plan your response below.

Choose a place that you like to visit. For example, it could be a relative's house, a park, or someplace farther away that you have been to with your family. Write an informative piece about this place. Tell where it is, what it looks like, and what you do there. Include details about the place to support your writing.







## Checklist for Informational Writing

Does your informational essay

- have a clear and focused subject?
- have a strong topic sentence?
- have a logical structure?
- present information clearly?
- use linking words and phrases to join ideas?
- use a style and vocabulary that are correct for the audience and purpose?
- have a solid conclusion?
- have good spelling, capitalization, and punctuation?
- follow the rules for good grammar?

Read the passage.

### Social Networking Tips

Social networking is a popular method for connecting with family and friends. You can make sure that the experience is a positive one by taking a few simple steps.

**Safety** All sites include safety features, such as passwords. Too many people use passwords that are simple to figure out, such as their birthday, pet's name, or address. The strongest passwords use a combination of characters: numbers, letters, and punctuation marks. Once you have a strong password, don't share it. Be sure to sign out of each site when you are finished.

**Privacy** Remember that the automatic setting for many sites is public—what you share online can be viewed by anyone. Most sites have privacy settings that you can change. The safest settings are those that allow only people you approve to view your posts. If you have trouble understanding the privacy settings, read the FAQ (“Frequently Asked Questions”) section or contact a representative of the site to help you.

**Verify** Before you accept someone into your social-networking circle, be sure that he or she is someone you know and trust. Many sites encourage users to build networks with many connections, but it isn't always safe to let everyone in. In addition, double-check any files, photos, or videos before you download them. Some can damage your computer or can access your personal files.

Social networking sites keep people connected. They are an inexpensive, easy way to share details of your life with people you care about. But taking precautions to keep your account(s) safe, private, and protected are worth the time.

## Plan Your Writing

Read the writing prompt, and then plan your response below.

Why is it important to follow safety procedures when using a social network? What can happen if you are not careful and thoughtful when social networking? Use what you already know about social networking and the information provided in the article “Social Networking Tips” to write an informational essay about responsible social networking. Give your essay an original title. Be sure to include a strong topic sentence and concluding statement. Use headings if they help you organize your ideas.

