Write Like You Speak in a Personal Narrative

1. Focus

Explain Writing Like You Speak in a Personal Narrative

Say: When I write a personal narrative, I want to tell my readers about something that happened to me. I want them to know my thoughts and feelings about what happened, and I want to describe details about it. I also want my readers to feel as if we are sitting down together to have a conversation about what happened. So I write like I speak, in a friendly way, using language that sounds like I am talking. Today I'm going to show you an example of a personal narrative by a boy named Jacob, in which he writes like he speaks. Then we'll practice writing sentences that sound like we are talking so that we know how to use this type of voice when we write our personal narratives.

Model How to Write Like You Speak

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for language that sounds as if the writer is speaking to them as you read the text aloud.


Then she took out another tool. It was a cross between pliers and scissors. I figured that it must be her favorite weapon. “This won’t hurt a bit, honey,” she said.

Right. Oh no! Here it goes . . . Pop!

Modeling Text

Say: In this passage, the writer uses words that make sounds, such as zip, click, and pop, just like you might do if you were describing sounds to a friend. Many of his sentences also use words that you might use when talking to a friend. For example, he says, “I figured that it must be” and “Right. Oh no! Here it goes . . .” He makes a little joke—as you might do talking with a friend—by saying that he thought a tool might be the woman’s “favorite weapon.” This informal language in a personal narrative makes me feel close to the writer. I feel I get to know him because, in his writing, he is just being himself.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn about writing like they speak in a personal narrative.
• Practice writing sentences in a conversational voice.
• Discuss how to apply this strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation
If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling and practice texts onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.
2. Rehearse

Practice Writing Like You Speak

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

I went to the doctor when I was sick.

Practice Text

Ask students to add two or three sentences to this one. Ask students to write the sentences using words that make it sound like they are speaking to somebody they know well. Students can change the existing sentence and add additional text so that readers will hear their speaking voice. Students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite them to read aloud their sentences and explain why these sentences sound like a person speaking rather than a person writing a formal narrative. Record sample student sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write their own personal narratives.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that in a personal narrative you can write like you speak. This is a way to get closer to your readers because you are being yourself and speaking honestly. As you write your personal narrative, remember to pick words that make your writing sound like your own speaking voice. This kind of voice helps you communicate your experience to your readers.

Encourage students to practice writing like they speak during independent writing time. During student conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to read aloud a section of their personal narratives in which they used language that sounds like their speech.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning and Intermediate
Model how you write like you speak by first talking about a visit to the doctor or dentist. Invite students to tell about a similar visit as if they are speaking to a friend or someone much younger. Reinforce that writers can “talk” on paper by using syntax words that make the writing sound like speech.

Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice.

All Levels
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: language/el lenguaje; narrative/la narrativa; voice/la voz.