Use Trial-and-Error Research to Evaluate a Text

1. Focus

Explain Trial-and-Error Research

Say: When you write a procedural text, you tell readers how to make or do something. You will list the supplies and equipment, and you will write the steps. But first, you should do some research to make sure the procedure works. This means you should try the project yourself to see if the steps work as you think they will, or if you will need to make adjustments. Today we’re going to practice doing this together.

Model Evaluating a Procedure Using Trial-and-Error Research

Display the modeling text using chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Model the following steps in the procedure by drawing the toast on chart paper. Take notes on chart paper about possible changes. Note: Save your notes to use in the following research lesson.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Learn to use trial-and-error research to evaluate a procedure.
• Practice using trial and error to evaluate a procedure.
• Discuss the strategy and how they can apply it 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 text onto chart paper.

How to Draw a Piece of Happy Toast

Supplies:
• paper
• pencil

Directions:
Draw a rectangle. Next, draw an arch in each upper corner. Now you’re ready to draw the rest of the character. Finally, color your character.

Sample Think-Aloud

Say: I have an idea for a procedural text. I want to tell how to draw a cartoon piece of toast. I’ve jotted down the supplies and the steps, but I want to do them myself to see if they work or if I need to make adjustments. I’ll take notes about changes I need to make. My first step is to draw a rectangle. I see a problem already. I need to tell people which way to draw the rectangle. I’ll make a note of that on my instructions. Model writing your notes on chart paper.

Say: My next step is to draw an arch in each upper corner to show how bread sort of puffs up at the top. OK, that works. Now I should erase the earlier marks I made for the rectangle. Oh, I don’t have an eraser. I don’t have this step either. These are two more things I’m going to need to add to my procedural text. I’m going to add an eraser to the list of supplies. Hmmm. These lines are sort of
Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Beginning ELs will not be able to contribute many ideas orally. You will want to work with them individually to reinforce concepts while other students write independently.

Intermediate and Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.

2. Rehearse

Practice Evaluating a Procedure Using Trial-and-Error Research

Ask students to work with partners to test the remaining steps in the procedure (beginning with “Now you’re ready to draw”) and determine if they work or if students need to make adjustments. Encourage students to make notes about problems they encounter.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share the ideas they generated with their partners. Ask: Was the direction “draw the rest of the character” specific enough? What other information would be helpful? Was the supply list complete? What was missing? Ask students to discuss how they can apply this strategy to their independent research.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: Today we learned about using trial and error to research a procedure. If we do the steps of a procedure ourselves before we write the text, we can make sure the procedure works and that we have all the supplies we need. If it doesn’t work, we can take notes so we can make adjustments to the steps later.

Encourage students to test their procedures by using trial-and-error research and taking notes. During student conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share the results of their trial-and-error research.