Selective Research: Find Facts to Support an Argument

1. Focus

Explain Selective Research

Say: Once you have an idea for a persuasive letter and the arguments you’re going to present, you need to do research to learn facts that will support your opinion. Strong facts will help readers understand your point of view. You should also research the opposing viewpoint so that you have information for the counterargument. When you research for facts for a persuasive letter, you may not use all the information you find. You will want to use only facts that support your argument. You don’t want to weaken your argument by presenting facts that do not support your viewpoint. This is called selective research. Today I’ll show you how to do selective research.

Model Conducting Selective Research

Sample Think-Aloud

Say: In my persuasive letter, I’m arguing that we shouldn’t allow water bottles on desks. My research involved interviewing teachers and students about their thoughts on the problem. One of my questions concerned whether having water bottles on desks in class time was distracting. I found out that two-thirds of the students I interviewed agreed that it was distracting. I can use this information to support my argument. I won’t focus on the one-third who didn’t find it distracting, because this supports an opposing point of view to mine. When I interviewed the teachers, I found that all of them agreed that having water bottles on desks during class time could be distracting. But about a quarter of the teachers said that they have been able to work out a system with their students so that it is not usually a problem now. To support my argument, I need to be selective in choosing the information to report. I can rightly say that all the teachers who I interviewed said that having water bottles has been a disruption. What I won’t say is that some teachers have been able to work out their own system because this supports the opposing point of view. When we write our persuasive letters, we need to use facts that are true, but we can choose to use only those true facts that support our argument. Conducting research for a persuasive letter is different from conducting research for an informational report. For a report, we include all the facts about our topic. We are not arguing for a particular point of view.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Learn about researching to find facts that support a position for a persuasive letter.
• Learn about researching to find facts that support the opposing view.
• Practice researching to find facts that support a position and to find facts that support the opposing view.
• 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 practice text onto chart paper.
2. Rehearse

Practice Conducting Selective Research

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

Environmentalists support the continued protection for wolves. They point out that when wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone, they played a part in regulating elk and deer populations, which in turn led to a comeback of trees, shrubs, and grasses. Ranchers don’t want protection for wolves because they feel wolves are responsible for the loss of many sheep and cattle each year. Hunters feel that too many wolves will lead to decreases in the numbers of deer and elk.

Practice Text

Explain that the practice text provides information on the argument of whether wolves should be protected or not. Invite students to use selective research to choose the information they would use to support an argument that wolves should be protected. Ask them to think about how using this information is different when writing a persuasive letter compared to an informational report.

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 information they would use. Ask: How is doing research for a persuasive letter different from doing research for an informational report? Help students see that in a persuasive letter they are looking only for facts to support their argument. Since they have to be selective about the facts they choose, they wouldn’t include the information from hunters and ranchers. But in an informational report, they would include this information to provide readers with all the facts.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: Today we learned that researching facts to support an argument is different from researching facts for an informational report. We learned that we need to include true facts to support our argument, but that we are selective in choosing only those facts that will support our argument.

Encourage students to apply this mini-lesson as they research information to support the position they are taking in their letter. During 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 some of the information they discovered and explain how they will use this information selectively to support their position.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Pair beginning ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Keep in mind that they 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 small-group activity.