Write an Evidence-Based Paragraph

Classroom copy · 2 November 2026

In this estimated 40-minute lesson, learners write a focused paragraph that answers a text question, supports the answer with accurate details, explains how those details connect to the claim, and ends clearly. They keep claims within the passage and distinguish evidence from explanation.

Build an evidence-based paragraph

A paragraph answers a question with a connected explanation, not a list of details. Start with a claim that directly answers the question. Choose two accurate details from the text: quote a short phrase exactly or paraphrase it precisely. After each detail, explain what it shows and how it supports the claim. End with a sentence that completes the answer. A quotation by itself is not reasoning, and a detail that is true but unrelated does not strengthen the paragraph. Keep the claim within what the text supports.

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The Banner Test

Original fictional instructional example.

During art club, Lila’s group made a paper banner for the classroom. On Monday, Lila taped it beside the open door. Each time someone entered, the door brushed the paper and lifted one corner. Lila added two strips of tape, but the corner still curled.

On Tuesday, Dev suggested the wide board across the room. Lila moved the banner there. It stayed flat, and club members standing in the doorway could read the title. Lila kept one strip of tape on the corner that had lifted before.

Modeled practice

Read “The Banner Test” and answer: Which change most helped the banner work for readers? In the annotated model, bracketed labels show each sentence’s job; leave the labels out of your own writing. Follow the claim, two details, and an explanation after each detail. The model is one text-supported answer; another answer may work if it uses the passage well.

> [Claim] Moving the banner to the wide board helped most. [Evidence 1] On Monday, the door lifted a corner, and the corner still curled after Lila added two strips of tape. [Reasoning 1] Tape alone did not stop the curl. [Evidence 2] On the board, the banner stayed flat and readers could see its title from the doorway. [Reasoning 2] The new spot solved the curling problem and worked for readers at the doorway. [Closing] The move helped more than extra tape.

Plan your paragraph

Use this planner with the guided passage and, if helpful, the independent story. Keep the claim, details, and explanations connected to the question. You may quote a short phrase exactly or paraphrase precisely.

Claim: answer the question

_____

Evidence detail 1

_____

_____

How detail 1 supports the claim

_____

_____

Evidence detail 2

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_____

How detail 2 supports the claim

_____

_____

Closing sentence idea

_____

The Book Table

Original fictional instructional example.

The library club planned a display called “New Trails.” They arranged books in two stacks and placed a title card behind the tallest stack. From the doorway, Inez said she could not see the title. Rafa suggested adding more books to the table.

Bea moved the card to the front and lowered the tallest stack. The club asked Inez to look again. She read the title from the doorway, and Rafa found a book by using one of the labels. They kept two stacks because the table was narrow near the entrance. After lunch, a younger student chose a book without moving the stacks.

Guided practice

With a partner or on your own, answer: How did the club use feedback to make the display easier to browse? Use the planner to write a claim, one detail about what a reader first noticed, and one detail about the revision or later check. After each detail, explain how it supports your answer; if working alone, write a brief note. Identify one true detail that is less useful for answering the question. Discuss your plan with a partner or jot brief notes; do not write the full paragraph yet.

The Book Swap Sign

Original fictional instructional example.

Maya made a sign for the class book swap. Its title, date, and directions were all written in the same size, with two small book drawings around them. She taped it inside the classroom beside the door. From the hallway, Niko could read “Book Swap” but not the day. Lee asked where students should leave the books.

Maya asked both classmates what information they needed. She made “Friday” larger, added an arrow and the words “Place books in the blue box,” then moved the sign to the wall above that box near the library shelf. The next morning, Niko read the day from the hallway, and Lee followed the arrow to the box. A younger student also put a book in the right place. Maya kept one drawing as a border because it did not cover any words.

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Independent response

Write one focused paragraph answering: How did Maya use reader feedback to make the book-swap sign easier to use? State a clear claim, include at least two accurate details from the story, and explain how each detail supports your answer. End with a sentence that completes the answer. You may quote a short phrase exactly or paraphrase precisely. Use the planner if it helps; leave out details that do not support your claim.

Independent evidence-based paragraph

Original fictional model passage “The Banner Test.”

Original fictional guided passage “The Book Table.”

Original fictional independent passage “The Book Swap Sign.”

Teacher directions

Grade 6 ELA. Adapt the reading and response demands to your students and curriculum.

Prerequisites: Learners can read or listen to a short passage and locate a sentence or detail. No prior paragraph formula is required.

Materials: Learner pages in print or editable format.; Pencil; a highlighter or two colored pencils are optional for marking claim, evidence, and explanation.; Board or display for the model paragraph; optional.

Estimated preparation: 5 minutes. Basis: Estimate to read the passages and answer guidance, prepare copies, and review the paragraph planner.

Estimated teaching: 40 minutes. Basis: Planning estimate: opening 3 minutes, strategy 5, model 8, guided practice 10, independent writing 12, closure 2.

Before teaching (about 5 minutes, estimate): read the three passages and keys, prepare learner copies, and decide whether learners will mark the printed planner or use notebooks. All examples and passages are original fiction; no outside reading or factual background is required.

Opening — 3 minutes (estimate): ask what makes a detail useful for answering a question. Explain that a paragraph needs a clear answer and the reader needs to see how details support it.

Strategy — 5 minutes (estimate): teach four moves: answer the question in a claim; select two accurate details; explain what each detail shows about the claim; write a closing sentence that completes the answer. A quote can provide evidence, but the writer must explain it. Precise paraphrase is also acceptable.

Model — 8 minutes (estimate): read “The Banner Test” and model the question. Think aloud: the corner still curls after extra tape; on the wide board it stays flat and readable. Connect both details to the claim that moving it helped most. Explain why tape alone is a weaker answer and limit the claim to this display.

Guided practice — 10 minutes (estimate): partners, or learners working on their own, read “The Book Table” and use the planner to state a claim and select a detail about the first reader observation and one about the change or later check. Partners explain each connection aloud; learners working alone write a brief note after each detail. Ask pairs to name one true but less relevant detail and why it does not answer the prompt as directly; solo learners can note one. Do not require a complete paragraph during this step.

Independent writing — 12 minutes (estimate): learners read “The Book Swap Sign” and write one paragraph answering how Maya used reader feedback. Look for a focused claim, at least two accurate details, explanation, and a closing sentence. Accept short exact quotations or precise paraphrases and supported wording different from the key.

Closure — 2 minutes (estimate): learners underline the claim, mark two evidence details, and put a star by the explanation that links evidence to the answer. Ask them to check whether the final sentence completes the response.

Shortened 30-minute option (estimate): opening 2 minutes; strategy 4; model 5; guided practice 7; independent writing 10; closure 2. Keep the independent paragraph and the evidence-to-claim explanation. Shorten partner share-out and model discussion, not the evidence requirement.

Support: read the passage aloud or use available text-to-speech, chunk it by paragraph, and use one mark for evidence and another for explanation. Offer the planner and oral rehearsal or dictation when

transcription is not the target; record the response mode. Preserve the learner’s own claim and evidence choices. Confirm individual access needs locally; general suggestions do not replace an access plan.

Extension: invite learners to write a second paragraph that emphasizes a different supported revision in the same passage, then compare which details best answer the prompt. They may also identify one true detail they left out and explain why it was less relevant.

Common confusions: a quotation is evidence, not a complete explanation; a claim should answer the question rather than repeat it; a detail can be accurate but irrelevant; and a sample paragraph is one defensible response, not the only acceptable wording. Do not penalize spelling or handwriting unless meaning is unclear because they are not the lesson target.

Model — intended evidence: Learner can locate a focused claim, two accurate details, and explanations connecting details to the answer; the model notes that adding tape did not stop the curling and the move to the wide board left the banner flat and readable.

Guided practice — intended evidence: Learner states that the club responded to Inez not seeing the title by moving the card to the front and lowering the stack, then checked whether a reader could see it. Rafa's suggestion to add more books or the narrow table can be mentioned but does not by itself explain the display revision.

Independent response — intended evidence: Learner explains how Maya acted on the readers' difficulty with the date and book drop-off by enlarging the date, adding a clear arrow/direction, and moving the sign above the box; later reader actions show the changes helped.

Answer keys

— key for Model

Moving the banner to the wide board helped most. On Monday, the door lifted a corner, and the corner still curled after Lila added two strips of tape, so tape alone did not stop the curl. On the board, the banner stayed flat and readers could see its title from the doorway. The new spot solved the curling problem and worked for readers at the doorway, so the move helped more than extra tape.

The annotated model identifies a focused claim, two accurate details, and reasoning after each detail. It explains that tape did not stop the curl and that the new location kept the banner flat and readable. The closing compares the move with tape while staying within the story. The passage does not establish a previous visibility problem; later readability is evidence that the new location works for readers, not proof that they could not read the title before.

Lila’s move to the wide board helped most. The banner’s corner still curled after she added tape. On the board, the banner stayed flat and people at the doorway could read it. This shows the new location solved the curling problem and worked for doorway readers.

Learners may argue that adding tape or moving the banner mattered most if they use two accurate details and explain the limits. The story says tape did not stop the curl, so a tape-only answer needs to address that evidence.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3, Criterion 4

— key for Guided practice

The club used Inez’s feedback to change what readers could see. At first, the title card sat behind the tallest stack, and Inez could not see it from the doorway. Bea moved the card to the front and lowered the stack; when Inez checked again, she could read the title. These details show that the club tested the display from a reader’s point of view and acted on the result. Rafa’s idea to add books is part of the discussion, but it does not explain the revision that made the display easier to browse.

The response links Inez’s first observation to the card/stack revision and the second viewing. It explains why the reader check supports the claim. A correct answer may use other accurate details from the passage.

The club made the title easier to see by moving the card in front and lowering the tall stack. Inez could not see the card from the doorway at first, but after the change she could read it there. That test shows the revision helped a reader browse.

Accept another text-supported account of how the club used feedback. Learners may mention that the group kept two stacks because the table was narrow, but that detail alone does not explain how feedback improved browsing.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3, Criterion 4

— key for Independent response

Maya used readers’ questions to revise both the sign’s information and its location. Niko could see the title but not the day, so Maya made “Friday” larger. Lee did not know where to leave a book, so Maya added an arrow to the blue box and moved the sign above it. The next morning, Niko read the day from

the hallway, and Lee followed the arrow. These details show that Maya used feedback to make the sign clearer and easier to act on.

The sample answers the prompt, uses evidence about both the unreadable date and unclear drop-off, explains the revisions, and connects the later checks to the result. A paragraph may select other accurate evidence while keeping a focused claim.

Maya changed the sign after Niko and Lee tried to use it. Niko could not read the day from the hall, so she made Friday larger. Lee was unsure where books belonged, so she added an arrow and put the sign over the blue box. The next morning they could read and follow it. Her changes answered the readers' questions.

Accept a supported paragraph emphasizing one change or the combination. Require at least two relevant details and explanation; do not require the exact sample wording or a claim that every reader will understand the sign.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3, Criterion 4

Scoring criteria and extensions

Criterion 1 — scoring criterion

States a focused claim that directly answers the question. Example: Maya used readers' questions to make the sign clearer and easier to follow. Alternatives: Accept a different clear answer supported by the story, including emphasis on the larger date, the arrow, the new location, or the combination of revisions.

Criterion 2 — scoring criterion

Uses at least two accurate and relevant text details as evidence, through exact short quotations or precise paraphrases. Example: Niko could read the title but not the day; later he read Friday from the hallway. Alternatives: Accept other accurate details that help answer the prompt. Do not require direct quotation; a precise paraphrase is valid. Do not count an unrelated detail as evidence for the claim.

Criterion 3 — scoring criterion

Explains how the evidence supports the claim instead of only listing or repeating details. Example: Making the date larger addressed the part Niko could not read. Alternatives: Accept clear reasoning in the learner's own words. The explanation may follow each detail or connect both details together, as long as the link is understandable.

Criterion 4 — scoring criterion

Organizes the ideas into one readable paragraph with a clear ending that completes the answer. Example: The final sentence explains that the sign became easier to understand and use. Alternatives: Accept varied sentence order and transitions. Do not score handwriting or spelling unless it makes the meaning unclear; this task assesses evidence and explanation.

Support (Independent response): Chunk the story, reread directions aloud or use available text-to-speech, mark evidence and explanation in different ways, and offer the planner plus oral rehearsal or dictation if transcription is not the target. Preserve the independent claim-and-evidence task; record response mode and check individual access needs locally.

Extension (Independent response): Write a second supported paragraph emphasizing a different revision, compare which evidence answers the same question most directly, and explain why one accurate but less relevant detail was left out.

Fictional teaching response — sound for the named task

Named task: The Book Swap Sign — focused evidence paragraph

Fictional response — sound for the named task: “Maya used reader feedback to make the sign’s key information easier to find and use. When Niko could not read the day from the hallway, she enlarged ‘Friday’; he could read it the next morning. Lee’s question about where to leave books led her to add an arrow and blue-box directions and place the sign above the box, which Lee then followed. These revisions addressed the readers’ specific problems, although the story does not establish that every possible reader could use the sign.”

Visible evidence: A focused claim, two problem/revision/result connections and a relevant ending/limit.

Not established: A universal accessibility result or causal evidence beyond the fictional story.

Clarify: Accept a supported paragraph emphasizing either readability or directions while retaining at least two relevant details and explained links.

Next teaching/evidence: Use the evidence-paragraph part of the separate evidence-paragraph and revision pack Fresh recheck after another learning opportunity. Its revision task has a separate target; do not combine those results into one placement score.

This response is invented for teacher interpretation. Accept defensible alternatives. Record access, prior exposure and the actual response; do not assign an ability label or claim mastery from this example.

Different check after response teaching

Evidence Paragraphs: Check, Respond and Revise — matching teacher directions and answers

Fictional teaching response — partially developed

Named task: The Book Swap Sign — focused evidence paragraph

Fictional response — partially developed: “Maya made Friday bigger and added an arrow. She moved the sign.”

Visible evidence: Accurate revision details.

Not established: The focused answer, each detail’s link to reader feedback or a completed paragraph conclusion.

Clarify: Ask which reader problem each change answers and what later action gives relevant feedback.

Next teaching/evidence: Use the evidence-paragraph and revision pack’s evidence-paragraph model and supported practice with its matching teacher explanation. Connect claim→relevant detail→why it answers the question, then reserve the evidence-writing part of Fresh recheck.

This response is invented for teacher interpretation. Accept defensible alternatives. Record access, prior exposure and the actual response; do not assign an ability label or claim mastery from this example.

Model and supported practice

Reserve: Different check after response teaching

Evidence Paragraphs: Check, Respond and Revise — matching teacher directions and answers

Fictional teaching response — plausible error

Named task: The Book Swap Sign — focused evidence paragraph

Fictional response — plausible error: “Maya removed every drawing, so everyone understood the sign immediately.”

Visible evidence: Attention to sign design as a possible part of the explanation.

Not established: Accurate source use: she kept one drawing, and the universal/immediate result is not established.

Clarify: Ask the learner to find the kept-drawing sentence and the actual Niko/Lee/younger-student results before making a claim.

Next teaching/evidence: Correct unsupported facts before polishing wording. Use the linked evidence-paragraph and revision pack evidence model/practice to connect a bounded claim to actual details; reserve its different evidence-paragraph recheck.

This response is invented for teacher interpretation. Accept defensible alternatives. Record access, prior exposure and the actual response; do not assign an ability label or claim mastery from this example.

Model and supported practice

Reserve: Different check after response teaching

Evidence Paragraphs: Check, Respond and Revise — matching teacher directions and answers