

## Tips and Tools for Great Writing: A Workshop

Created by Gretchen Landin for SCFS

The ABC's of addressing a writing prompt taken from Gallagher's *Teaching Adolescent Writers*:

A) **Attack** the prompt:

- i) Circle any word that asks you to do something.
- ii) Cross out extra information to keep us from being distracted.
- iii) Draw an arrow from each circled word to what it specifically tells you to do.
- iv) Rewrite and number the circled words to create a specific prompt.

Let's Try It:

B) **Brainstorm** Possible Answers - Think about the graphic organizers you know how to use and which would be appropriate for completing the prompt. Graphic Organizers taken from Evan-Moor's *Daily 6-Trait Writing Workbook*

- i) Word Web: Generating ideas
- ii) Narrowing a Topic: Focusing your ideas
- iii) Cause and Effect Diagram: Organizing Details
- iv) Opinion Diagram: Persuasive Prompt
- v) Venn Diagram: Compare and Contrast Prompt

Let's Practice:

C) **Choose** the Order of Your Response – Revisit your organizer, and create an outline of what you are going to write. Remember to ask yourself **what do I know and how do I know it, then support your answer.**

- i) Outlines do not have to be perfect looking – but they do need to be specific.
- ii) Choose your first idea and then how you are going to support it
  - (1) Evidence from a text?
  - (2) Facts from the reading or known information?
  - (3) Direct Quotes with page numbers?

**Writing a Topic Sentence:** Now that you have organized your ideas you need to write a fantastic sentence to let your audience know what they will be reading about. Here is a “format”:

- 1) Topic of the Prompt – “what I know”
- 2) Strong verb – to show or demonstrate your knowledge
- 3) Support / Ideas – “how I know it”

Let's Write One:

**Reference:**

Gallagher, K. (2006) *Teaching adolescent writers*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

## Writing Prompts:

### Narrative Prompts-

- Many people influence us. Sometimes they introduce us to a new interest or hobby, or sometimes they affect our views on things. Think of someone who has had a significant influence on you and **tell a true story** about it.
- Lots of people try to give us advice—parents, friends, brothers or sisters, teachers, etc. **Tell a true story** about a time you were given or gave advice. Tell if the advice was followed or not and the results.
- Walt Disney once said, “If you can dream it, you can do it.” **Tell a true story** about a time when this was true for you or someone you know.

### Expository –

- What do you think is the best thing to do when someone says, “Who wants to go first?” or “Does anyone want to volunteer?” Write a paper to **explain** what you think is the best approach when you hear those words.
- Students sometimes question how things they learn will help them in their later lives. Think of a positive learning experience that you have had and **explain** how what you learned will be useful to you in the future.
- **Explain** your dream home of the future and what would make it perfect for you.

Persuasive -

- Playing video games has many pros and cons. Think about whether or not you, as a parent, would place a limit on the number of hours per day that your son or daughter could play video games. Take a position on this issue and **convince** other parents to agree with you.
- Think of something you would like to have changed or added in your school. It could relate to a school policy, a facility or building, or course offerings. Take a position on one specific issue and **convince** others to agree with you.
- Choose an issue from your community (such as a leash law, community service, teenage curfew, or anything else). Take a position on that issue and **write a paper to convince** your reader to agree with your point of view.

Imaginative -

- Suppose a person or family packed up for a vacation to one destination, but ended up somewhere else. **Write an imaginative story** about an event from a mixed-up vacation.
- Pretend you saw or found something mysterious. **Write an imaginative story** about what you saw and what happened.

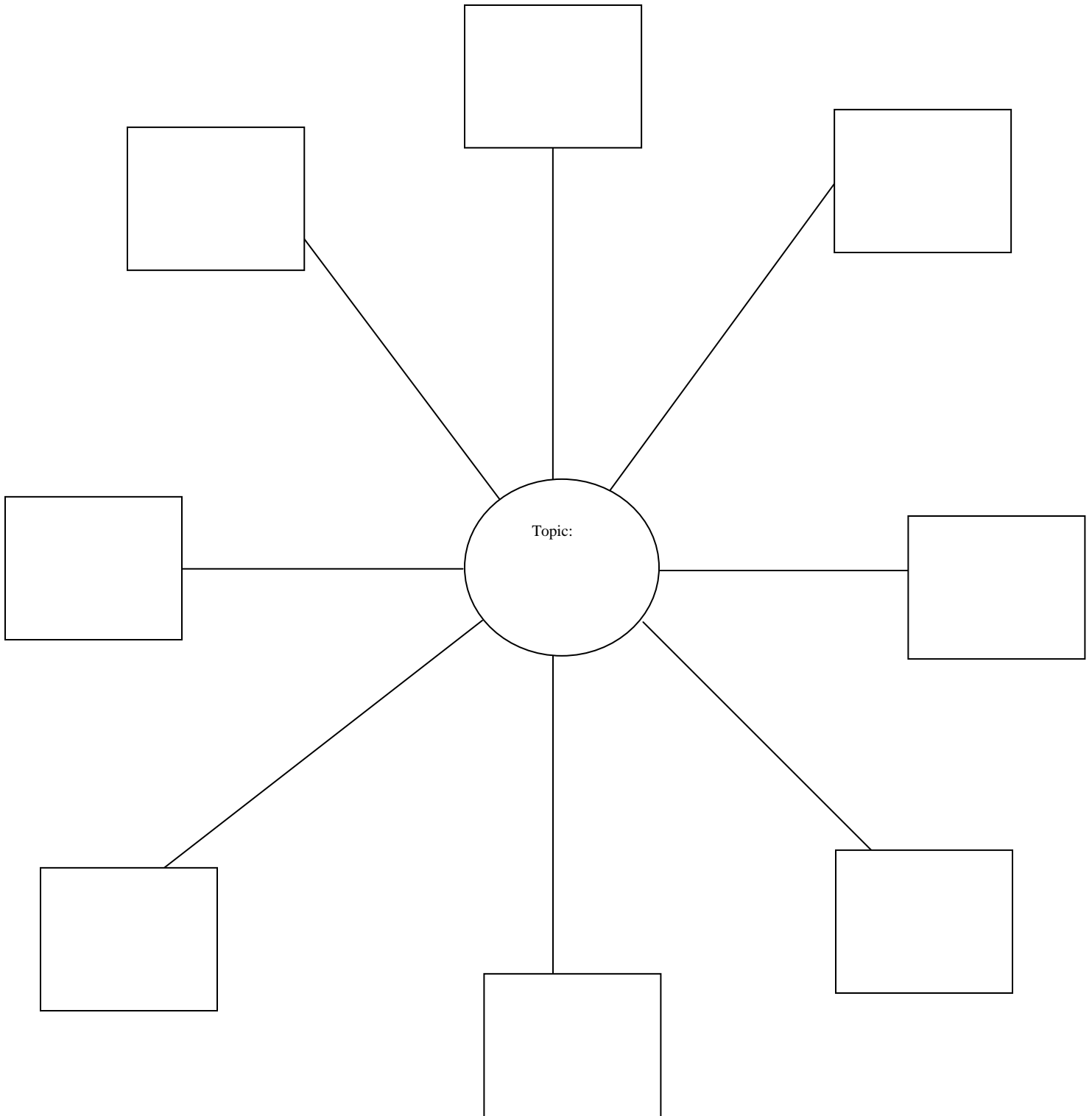
**Reference:**

Oregon Department of Education / Office of Assessment (Fall 2009) Writing Sample Prompts.

Retrieved from: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=523>

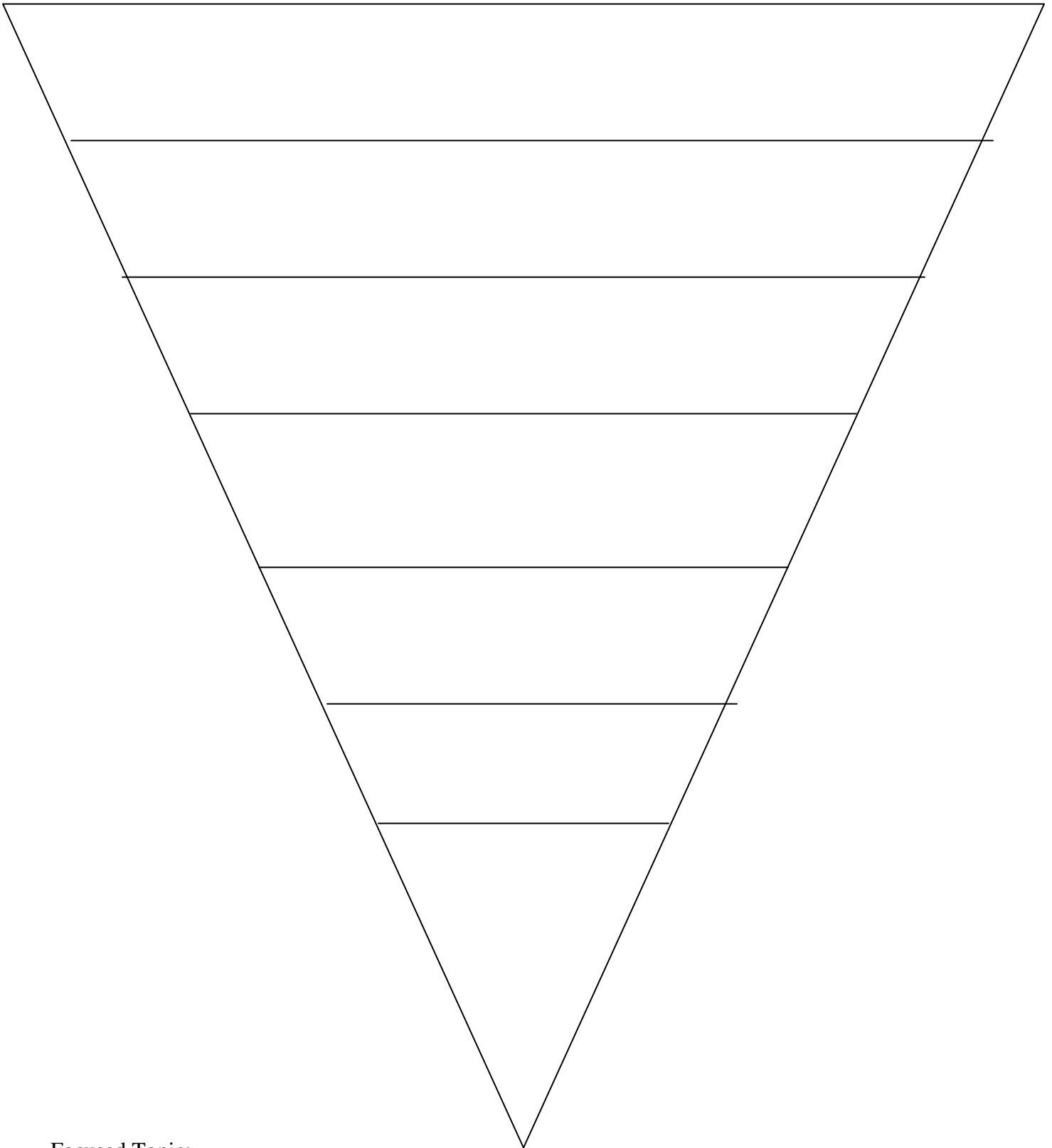
**Word Web: Brainstorming**

Place the main topic in the center and your ideas for support in the boxes. You do not have to fill all the boxes, or if you need to add more boxes you can.



### **Inverted Triangle: Narrow a Topic**

Write a broad topic on the top line. Write one part of that topic on the next line. Repeat the process until the topic is focused.




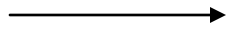
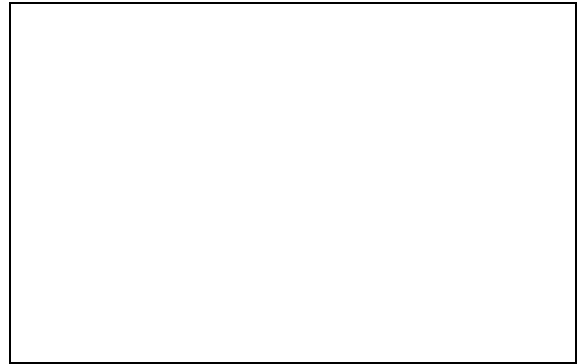
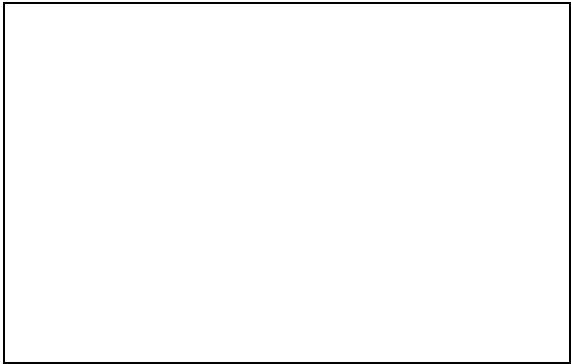
Focused Topic:

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### Cause and Effect Diagram:

**Cause:**

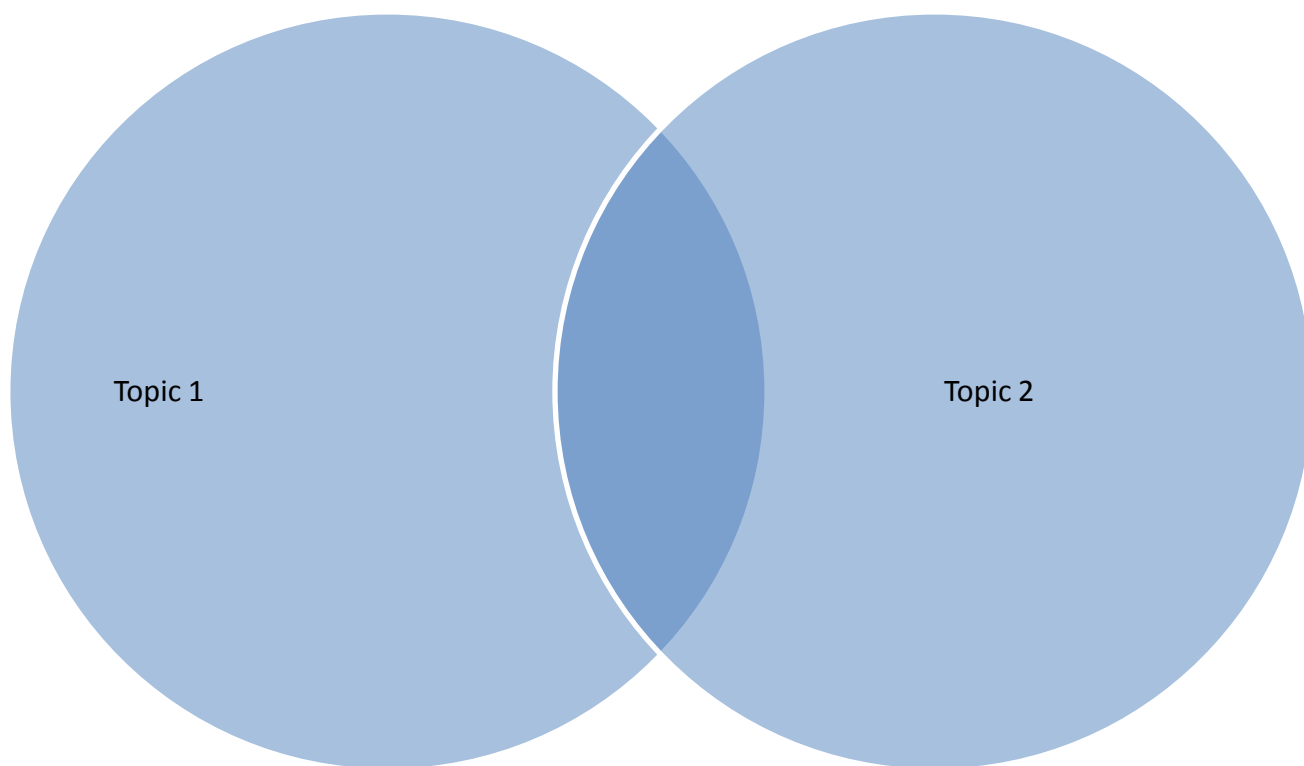
**Effect:**



## Opinion Diagram: Persuasive

|                     |
|---------------------|
| Opinion Statement:  |
| Reason 1:           |
| Reason 2:           |
| Possible Objection: |

## Venn diagram: Compare and Contrast



### References:

Evan-Moor Educational Publishers. (2008) *Daily 6-trait writing: Grade 6*. Monterey, CA: Evan-Moor Corp.