

Color-Coding

Lesson Objective	(Revising) Students will organize topically related sentences to form paragraphs and identify opportunities for elaboration and/or to correct redundancy.	
Vocabulary	<p>topic: the main subject of a sentence or paragraph</p> <p>key: a space in which to record the topic that each color represents</p> <p>freewriting: writing without focusing on organization or mechanics</p> <p>elaborate: add more detail about a topic</p> <p>redundancy: repeated ideas</p>	
Reviewed Vocabulary	conclusion, introduction	
Instructional Materials	Teacher	Student
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Masters • Demonstrate and Practice—One set of thin markers or pens in at least six colors, including red, green, blue, orange, purple, and pink • Demonstrate and Practice—Either make a color copy of TM#1 or prepare the black-and-white TM#2 by underlining the first six sentences with the colors specified. • Timer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Booklet • Demonstrate and Practice—Sets of thin markers or pens in at least five colors (at least one set per pair of students)

Teacher Note

Distribute the markers or colored pens to the students prior to the start of the lesson.

Preview

An author must present his or her thoughts to the reader in a logical order. However, writers' thoughts do not always come to them in a clearly organized way. Writing without focusing on mechanics or organization is called *freewriting*.

Freewriting can be difficult for a reader to understand. For this reason, it is usually best to prepare an outline to organize your thoughts before you begin writing. However, some writers find that their plan changes as they write and develop new ideas. These writers must then revise to reorganize their ideas. You can do that in your own writing. Color-coding a draft of your writing can help you spot ideas that need reorganizing, as well as help you create paragraphs.

Teacher Note

Students should be encouraged to create an outline during the prewriting stage to organize their thoughts before writing. However, many students ignore this step and proceed to draft their paper by freewriting. This lesson is *not* designed to encourage students to engage in freewriting instead of outlining, but rather to teach them how to organize their draft during the revising stage.

Engage Prior/Informal Knowledge

1. Students complete a silent warm-up to review what they already know about organizing ideas in writing.

Have students complete *SB#1: Engage Prior Knowledge—Silent Warm-Up*. Set the timer for 3 minutes.

2. Review student responses.

When 3 minutes have passed, have students share responses.

What makes the story difficult to follow? (*The writer jumps from one idea to another and back again.*)

Why do you think some people write like this? (*Possible answers include: to write quickly, because that is how they tell stories when they talk; because they want to get all of their ideas out.*)

This writer is telling a story but jumping from one idea to another. All writers struggle at times to organize their ideas in a way that is easy to follow. Today’s lesson will help you group the sentences in a rough draft together by topic, or the main subject of a sentence or paragraph. This will make the composition easier for your readers to understand.

Demonstrate

1. Explain the color-coding strategy.

Teacher Note

Either use the color copy of *TM#1: Demonstrate and Practice—Color-Coding Organizer*, or prepare the black-and-white *TM#2: Demonstrate and Practice—Color-Coding Organizer* to match. If using the latter: In the “Color-Coding Key,” color the first box (“Introduction”) blue, the second box red, and the third box green. In the draft, underline the first six sentences as follows: sentence 1, blue; sentence 2, red; sentences 3–4, green; sentences 5–6, red.

Display *TM#1* or *TM#2: Demonstrate and Practice—Color-Coding Organizer*, and explain the strategy. Direct students' attention to their copies, *SB#2: Demonstrate and Practice—Color-Coding Organizer*.

Teacher Note

Actual student writing will contain a variety of errors. The drafts in this lesson are designed to allow students to focus solely on the organization of ideas without being distracted by other types of errors.

We are going to underline each sentence in this draft in a different color by topic, which will allow us to easily see how the ideas in the composition can be organized into paragraphs. You can color-code early drafts of your own writing to be sure that your ideas are well organized. When you finish color-coding, you can use the colors to reorganize sentences into paragraphs. You might also notice places in your composition where you can elaborate, or add more detail about a topic. Finally, you might notice redundancy, or repeated ideas.

Look at the example. I have completed the first half, and we will finish color-coding the rest of the draft together.

When you are finished color-coding your draft, you should be able to group the colors together to create individual paragraphs about each topic.

2. Demonstrate the strategy.

We will go through the draft sentence by sentence and decide what each sentence is mostly about. As I work, copy the colors onto your paper using the markers at your desk.

The first sentence in this draft is: “During the week, I usually help my little sister get ready for school in the morning.”

We are considering what possible paragraphs each sentence would fit into, so we decide on a topic label for each sentence. Do not choose a topic that is so big that it applies to the whole composition. For example, in this story, we don't want to say that the topic of a sentence is "what she does in the morning," because that is what the whole story is about. That topic label would not help us divide the story into smaller paragraphs.

The first sentence is an introduction. I have underlined it in blue. I then created a key for my topics at the top. As you can see, a key is a space in which to record the topic that each color represents. I colored a blue square and wrote "Introduction" to show that everything I underlined in blue was the introduction. If I read any other sentences that should be part of the introduction, I will underline those in blue, too.

Ensure that students are coloring their boxes and underlining the sentence. Read the second sentence.

The second sentence is mostly about the sister getting dressed. This is more specific than the introduction, so I started a new color and underlined this sentence in red. I also colored a square red and wrote "Getting dressed" in my key.

Ensure that students underline and color the box. Read the third sentence.

Here the writer changes topic. This sentence is about making lunch, so I started a new color—green—and created a new square for "Making lunch" in the key.

Ensure that students underline and color the box. Read the fourth sentence.

The next sentence is also about making lunch, so I underlined that in green, too.

Ensure that students underline. Read the fifth sentence.

Now, the writer switches back to talking about getting dressed, the topic we underlined in red. So I underlined this sentence in red.

Ensure that students underline. Read the sixth sentence.

In this sentence, the writer seems worried that her sister is taking so long to get dressed. I have underlined that in red, too.

Ensure that students underline.

Now, we will complete the rest together.

Practice

1. Complete *TM#1 or TM#2: Demonstrate and Practice—Color-Coding Organizer* with class input. Refer to *TM#3: Demonstrate and Practice—Color-Coding Organizer Answer Key* as needed.

Watch For



Students might have different ideas about exactly what the topic of each sentence is. For example, students might say that the seventh sentence is about “making things difficult for dad” or “having enough time to get ready.” Choose one sentence to work with, and explain that writing is an individual process; you are simply developing an example as a group, and in their own work, students would use their own ideas.

Read the seventh sentence.

What is this sentence mostly about? (*Possible answers include: making things difficult for dad; having enough time to get ready.*)

We will add this topic to our key.

Use a orange marker to draw a fourth box on the key, and write the topic the students provided. Underline the seventh sentence in orange.

I notice that this sentence is related to the last one. In fact, the sixth sentence—“I was worried because I thought we were going to be late”—seems to connect the idea of making things difficult for her dad with the idea of making her dad late. So now I can tell that the sixth sentence connects two different ideas. How do you think we could show that this sentence connects two ideas? (*Underline it with both colors.*)

I’m going to go back and underline the sixth sentence in orange in addition to red, so that it’s clear the sentence connects two ideas. This shows us that this sentence is a transition sentence that should either end the paragraph with the red sentences or begin the paragraph with the orange sentences.

Read the eighth sentence.

Is this sentence mostly about a new topic, or about one of the topics we already have? (*It’s related to the topic of making lunch, which we have labeled in green.*)

So what color should I underline it? (*green*)

Underline the eighth sentence in green. Read the ninth sentence.

Is this sentence mostly about a new topic, or about one of the topics we already have? (*It’s related to the topic of getting dressed, which we have labeled in red.*)

So what color should I underline it? (*red*)

Underline the ninth sentence in red. Read the tenth sentence.

Is this sentence mostly about a new topic, or about one of the topics we already have? (*It’s a new topic, a concluding sentence about leaving.*)

So what should I do? *(Create a new color on the key, and underline it in that color.)*

Add a box in purple, and write “Conclusion” next to it. Underline the tenth sentence in purple. Read the final sentence.

Is this sentence mostly about a new topic, or about one of the topics we already have? *(It’s related to the idea of the dad’s work and making things difficult for dad, which we have labeled in orange.)*

So what color should I underline it? *(orange)*

Underline the final sentence in orange.

The next revising step for this student would be to rewrite the composition and group the sentences of each color together to form paragraphs. What are some examples of sentences that should be grouped together? *(sentences 2, 5, and 9; sentences 3, 4, and 8)*

After color-coding, you might also notice a place in the composition where you could elaborate, or add more detail about a topic. You might notice a topic that has very little underlined in that color. Do you see a color in which there is very little underlined? *(blue, purple)*

These colors are the introduction and conclusion, and it looks like the writer could elaborate on those ideas.

Finally, when you combine the sentences in different colors, you might notice redundancy. Redundancy is repeated words or ideas. What idea does this writer repeat? *(The writer doesn’t want to make things difficult, or cause problems, for the writer’s father at work.)*


2. Students practice color-coding in pairs.

Give students 10 minutes to work in pairs and complete **SB#3: Practice—Color-Coding Organizer**. Set the timer, have students restate the instructions, and check for understanding.

While they work, circulate among the students, check for understanding, and provide corrective feedback as needed.

When 10 minutes have passed, stop students. Ask for volunteers to share how they color-coded sentences and created the key. Refer to *TM#4: Practice—Color-Coding Organizer Answer Key*, as needed.

Have students share any sentences that might need elaboration or ideas that might be redundant.

<p>Watch For</p> 	<p>Students might have different ideas about exactly what the topic of each sentence is. Choose one sentence to work with, and explain that writing is an individual process; you are simply developing an example as a group, and in their own work, students would use their own ideas.</p>
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Independent Practice

1. Have students complete *SB#4: Independent Practice*.
2. Collect the materials, score the work using *TM#5: Independent Practice Answer Key*, and check for mastery.

Teacher Note

As an extension of this lesson, have students rewrite their own compositions to reorder the sentences into logical paragraphs, reduce unnecessary redundancy, and add elaboration where needed. Have students apply the strategy to early drafts of future compositions.