

Grade 4 ▶

Unit Six

PRE-INSTRUCTION CHECKLIST

MECHANICS	ACQUAINTANCE & ANALYSIS
<input type="checkbox"/> comma use: quotations	<input type="checkbox"/> Story: Short Story
<input type="checkbox"/> grammar: verb identification (active vs passive vs. linking)	WRITING ON DEMAND
<input type="checkbox"/> quotation mark use: quotations	<input type="checkbox"/> ongoing, all disciplines

PATTERN STATEMENT

Action communicates strength.

NOTES

Both the genre and the revision skill may be instructionally new to students, but the genre should be somewhat familiar from experience.

Some micro-level revisions correct other micro-level problems. For example, subject-verb placement and modifier revisions can shift sentences from passive to active voice. But not every instance of passive voice will be corrected without direct revision.

If the subject of a sentence performs an action, the sentence has an active voice. If the subject of the sentence receives the action, the sentence has a passive voice. Passive voice often features a form of was, will be, have been, or is being as part of its verb and the preposition by. For example, *The check was written by me. The law will be passed by Congress.*

Most of the time, a writer should strive for active voice. Gary Provost (1985) explains why:

Generally the active voice makes for more interesting reading, and it is the active voice that you should cultivate as your normal writing habit. The active voice strikes more directly at the thought you want to express, it is generally shorter, and it holds the reader closer to what you write because it creates a stronger sense that “something is happening” (p. 80).

Rare exceptions exist. If the receiver of the action should receive the emphasis, if the receiver is “done unto,” than a passive verb is appropriate: *The prince will be kidnapped in the morning.* In such cases, it is usually better not to include the actor in the sentence. Notice how much weaker the sentence becomes: *The prince will be kidnapped by the angry citizens in the morning.* It just loses some punch.

The genre, while familiar from experience, is a challenging assignment. If possible, include an extra round of coaching in this unit to help students move up the achievement levels defined on the rubric. Student short stories often read like a list of events. Challenge young writers to address fiction’s more subtle elements, such as character motivation and connections between characters, settings, and events. Encourage students to answer the question, “Why would/did this character say/think/do that?”

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The pattern, *Action communicates strength*, can be illustrated (EX-ex) by taking a cue from laundry product commercials. Show students a clear, enclosed bag of a powdered laundry product (“oxygen-based” products work well) or a clear plastic bottle of a liquid laundry product. Display this for the students and ask them to call out words to describe what they see. After a few suggestions, ask the students if they would describe the laundry product as “strong” and why or why not. Emphasize the idea that the powder or liquid does not look strong because it is not doing anything. If a student mentions that the liquid or powder might be strong, ask

how we could tell whether or not that were true. Then apply the liquid to a protein-based stain on a scrap of material or mix the powder with water and apply to the stain. The more students can see the product “working,” the better. A large, clear glass bowl could be used for the powder product so students can see the stain being removed.

Discussion (EX-co) could focus on comparing the view of the laundry product prior to seeing it “in action” with the perspective after seeing it work. Could we now describe

the liquid/powder as “strong”? Why? What changed our perspective? Developing a simple T-chart (before action vs. after action) could emphasize the contrast. This contrast sets up recognition of the pattern. What pattern do we see? If needed, guide students to the pattern: *Action communicates strength* (EX-el). Additional examples of *Action communicates strength* from the students’ life experiences (What else communicates strength when we see it in action?) provide additional reference points (EX-ap).

REVISION SKILL

ACTIVE VOICE			
Objective		Checklist	
With teacher prompting and support, student identifies a sentence, paragraph, or passage as written in active or passive voice, and, when beneficial, revises sentences written in passive voice to active voice.		<input type="checkbox"/> Read the draft sentence by sentence to identify any written in passive voice. <input type="checkbox"/> Unless the emphasis is intentionally placed on the receiver of the action, revise the sentence by making the subject perform an action.	
Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	PROFICIENT	ADEQUATE	NOT YET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features no examples of sentences with subjects and/or verbs placed so far into a sentence that they lose power. ▶ Writing is characterized by efficiency due to subject and verb word choices (i.e., need for modifiers is limited by good noun and verb choices). ▶ Additional revisions may improve some elements but subject/verb placement and noun/verb choices are effective and appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features no examples of sentences weakened by passive voice where active voice could be used. ▶ Some sentences could be made more efficient by stronger nouns and verbs that eliminate the need for modifiers (e.g., adjectives, adverbs). ▶ Additional revisions could strengthen the writing through stronger nouns and verbs and fewer modifiers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features few examples (two or fewer) of sentences weakened by passive voice where active voice could be used. ▶ Additional revision could strengthen writing by revising sentences expressed in passive voice to be expressed in active voice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features several examples (two or more) of sentences weakened by passive voice where active voice could be used. ▶ Significant revision could strengthen writing by revising several sentences expressed in passive voice to be expressed in active voice.

GENRE

STORY: Short Story			
Definition		Objective	
Presents a story with a fully developed theme and plot but is much shorter and usually less involved than a novel		With teacher prompting and support, student writes a short story that features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met, a reasonable (i.e., believable within the story's context) resolution, and appropriate description (e.g., of settings, character, events).	
Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	PROFICIENT	ADEQUATE	NOT YET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing presents a short story that features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met, a reasonable (i.e., believable within the story's context) resolution, and appropriate description (e.g., of settings, character, events). ▶ Story possesses good flow; interaction of events, characters, and settings provide a smooth reading experience, even when read aloud. <p>AND</p> <p>story possesses good believability through its attention to elements such as character motivations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Additional revisions may minimally improve the letter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing presents a short story that features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met, a reasonable (i.e., believable within the story's context) resolution, and appropriate description (e.g., of settings, character, events). ▶ Story possesses good flow; interaction of events, characters, and settings provide a smooth reading experience, even when read aloud. ▶ Additional development or revision may increase the story's believability by development of elements such as character motivations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing presents a short story that features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met, a reasonable (i.e., believable within the story's context) resolution, and appropriate description (e.g., of settings, character, events). ▶ Story lacks elements that would make it more believable, such as character motivations <p>OR</p> <p>Story reads like a sequence of disconnected events, lacking flow. This is especially apparent when the story is read aloud.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Additional development or revision could significantly improve the story's believability and/or flow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing fails to present a short story that features a problem to be solved or challenge to be met, a reasonable (i.e., believable within the story's context) resolution, and appropriate description (e.g., of settings, character, events). ▶ Additional development or revision could significantly improve content and/or clarity of the essay.

4
gradeunit
SixREVISION
SKILL

Active Voice

GENRE

Story:
Short Story

PRACTICE TEXT

“You don’t have a snapping turtle as a pet!” the sassy little redhead said. Her green eyes were squinted in disbelief.

“Do so, Kathleen!” Ken hollered back, glaring with icy blue eyes.

“Do not!”

“Do so!”

The argument was interrupted with a practical solution by Billy, who couldn’t stand fights of any kind. “Go on, Ken. Show her Chomp. Maybe then she will believe you.”

“Okay, sure.” The way was led by Ken to the backyard where his prize possession was kept in a metal cage. His thoughts at that moment were only focused on impressing the freckle-faced daughter of the police officer who lived across the street. Strict warnings from his parents to keep Chomp in the cage and take him out only with adult supervision were completely forgotten by Ken. His own honesty must be proved! That was all that was important.

The door to the cage was opened by Ken, who grabbed Chomp. The turtle came out of his gnarly twelve-inch shell, flailing his legs and poking out his head to see the world.

“Oh! He’s a big one! But how do you know he’s a snapper?” Kathleen doubted. “He could just be a plain old box turtle or a paint.”

“He’s a snapper, all right! See,” Ken held Chomp right out in front of Kathleen, and that’s when it happened. Chomp chomped! His long turtle neck reached out and nearly caught the nosy girl’s finger. Kathleen screamed, then she turned and rushed across the street. As she threw open the door and rushed into her own house, Ken noticed the police car parked in the driveway. Kathleen’s father was home.

Within ten minutes, the doorbell rang inside Ken’s house. As his mother opened the door, Ken craned his neck, looked out the entryway, and gulped. Kathleen’s dad, in full uniform with badge, nightstick, and gun, stood outside the screen door...

A POSSIBLE REVISION

This is not THE correct revision, but one possibility. Accept any justifiable revisions.

“You don’t have a snapping turtle as a pet!” the sassy little redhead said as she squinted her green eyes in disbelief.

“Do so, Kathleen!” Ken hollered back, glaring with icy blue eyes.

“Do not!”

“Do so!”

Billy, who couldn’t stand fights of any kind, interrupted the argument with a practical solution. “Go on, Ken. Show her Chomp. Maybe then she will believe you.”

“Okay, sure.” Ken led the way to the backyard where his prize possession was kept in a metal cage. His thoughts at that moment were only focused on impressing the freckle-faced daughter of the police officer who lived across the street. Completely forgot about the strict warnings from his parents to keep Chomp in the cage and take him out only with adult supervision. He wanted to prove his own honesty. That was all.

Ken opened the door to the cage and Ken grabbed Chomp. The turtle came out of his gnarly 12-inch shell, flailing his legs and poking out his head to see the world.

“Oh! He’s a big one! But how do you know he’s a snapper?” Kathleen doubted. “He could just be a plain old box turtle or a paint.”

“He’s a snapper, all right! See?” Ken held Chomp right out in front of Kathleen, and that’s when it happened. Chomp chomped! His long turtle neck reached out and his beak-like jaws nearly caught the nosy girl’s finger. Kathleen screamed, then she turned and rushed across the street. As she threw open the door to her own house, Ken noticed the police car parked in the driveway. Kathleen’s father was home.

Within ten minutes, the doorbell rang inside Ken’s house. As his mother opened the door, Ken craned his neck, looked at the entryway, and gulped. Kathleen’s dad, in full uniform with badge, nightstick, and gun, stood outside the screen door...

unit
SixREVISION
SKILL

Active Voice



GENRE

Story:
Short Story

4
grade