

Middle School ELA Reading, Writing, and Grammar Guide

A print-friendly Middle School ELA guide for grades 6-8 reading comprehension, annotation, vocabulary, text evidence, short responses, grammar, sentence structure, paragraphs, essays, novel study, and class discussion.

SECTIONS	6	WORKED EXAMPLES	6	FORMAT	Print friendly
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How to use this guide

A formula you cannot place is not knowledge yet. Work the recall drill below before the questions.

- Read with a pencil or annotation tool. Mark the main idea, confusing words, evidence, and questions.
- Answer questions with the text in front of you. Strong ELA work points back to specific words or lines.
- Revise writing in layers: claim and organization first, evidence and explanation second, grammar last.

1. Reading comprehension and annotation

NAME	FORMULA	WHEN TO USE
Main idea	what the text is mostly about	Keeps the reader focused on the central point.
Inference	text clue + background knowledge	Explains what the author suggests but does not state directly.
Theme	message about life or people	Connects events to a larger lesson or insight.
Annotation	highlight, margin note, question	Turns reading into active thinking.
Point of view	who tells the story	Shapes what the reader knows and notices.

WORKED EXAMPLE

A character keeps practicing after losing a contest. What inference can you make?

1. The text clue is repeated practice.
2. Background knowledge: people practice when they care about improving.
3. Inference: the character is determined.

Check: The inference is supported by a text clue, not a guess.

2. Vocabulary and context clues

NAME	FORMULA	WHEN TO USE
Definition clue	means, is called, refers to	The sentence explains the word directly.
Example clue	for example, such as	Examples point to the word meaning.
Contrast clue	but, however, unlike	An opposite idea helps reveal meaning.
Word parts	prefix, root, suffix	Breaks unfamiliar words into useful pieces.
Tone clue	positive, negative, neutral	Uses the feeling of the sentence to narrow meaning.

WORKED EXAMPLE

The trail was arduous, but the easy walk home felt relaxing. What does arduous mean?

1. The contrast word is but.
2. Easy is the opposite clue.
3. Arduous means difficult or tiring.

Check: The meaning fits the sentence.

3. Text evidence and short responses

NAME	FORMULA	WHEN TO USE
Claim	direct answer to the question	Starts the response with a clear point.
Evidence	quote, detail, line, example	Proves the claim using the text.
Reasoning	explain how evidence proves claim	Shows the student's thinking.
Sentence starter	The text states...	Introduces evidence smoothly.
Citation	line, page, paragraph	Helps the reader find the evidence.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Why is the narrator nervous? Use evidence from the passage.

1. Claim: the narrator is nervous about speaking.
2. Evidence: she checks her note cards three times.
3. Reasoning: repeated checking shows worry about forgetting what to say.

Check: The response answers the question and explains the evidence.

4. Grammar, sentences, and conventions

NAME	FORMULA	WHEN TO USE
Complete sentence	subject + verb + complete idea	Avoids fragments.
Run-on sentence	two sentences joined incorrectly	Needs punctuation or a conjunction.
Comma use	lists, intro phrases, clauses	Shows how ideas are grouped.
Verb tense	past, present, future	Keeps time consistent.
Pronoun clarity	clear noun reference	Prevents confusion about who or what is meant.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Fix the run-on: The class finished the novel it started the essay.

1. Find the two complete ideas.
2. Add punctuation and a transition.
3. Fixed: The class finished the novel, and then it started the essay.

Check: Each complete idea is separated correctly.

5. Paragraph and essay writing

NAME	FORMULA	WHEN TO USE
Topic sentence	main point of paragraph	Gives the paragraph direction.
Elaboration	details and explanation	Develops the idea instead of listing it.
Transition	however, for example, because	Shows relationships between ideas.
Conclusion	final insight or wrap-up	Leaves the reader with a clear ending.
Revision	organization, evidence, clarity	Improves meaning before proofreading.

WORKED EXAMPLE

A paragraph has evidence but no explanation. What should be added?

1. Identify what the evidence shows.
2. Explain how it supports the topic sentence.
3. Add one or two reasoning sentences after the evidence.

Check: A reader should not have to guess why the evidence matters.

6. Novel study and class discussion

NAME	FORMULA	WHEN TO USE
Character trait	brave, jealous, cautious	Describes a character with evidence.
Conflict	problem or struggle	Drives the plot forward.
Setting	time and place	Influences mood, conflict, and choices.
Discussion	listen, build, cite evidence	Uses classmates' ideas and text support.
Presentation	clear voice and organized points	Communicates thinking to an audience.

WORKED EXAMPLE

During discussion, a classmate says the main character is selfish. What is a strong response?

1. Agree or disagree respectfully.
2. Use a specific scene as evidence.
3. Explain how that scene supports your view.

Check: The response builds the discussion with evidence.

Notes and tutor hand-off

Bring this page to your next session so the tutor can start from what actually blocked you.

Current book, passage, or unit:

The reading or writing skill I want to strengthen:

Questions to bring to my tutor:
