

## Hard Evidence: Using Supporting Details in Essay Writing

**NOTE:** For this lesson plan, students should have already written a rough draft essay on the topic of gun violence. Use ICHV's **Student Voices Contest** as a starting point. Then return to this lesson plan to guide students toward revision and effective use of supporting details.

### PURPOSE

To effectively use evidence to support the claim or argument of an essay.

### GRADE LEVELS

Middle School

High School

### CONTENT AREAS

English/Language Arts

### TIME

2 class periods

### STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Students will define evidence and understand its importance in essay writing.
- Students will identify various types and examples of evidence or supporting details.
- Students will effectively incorporate evidence into an essay to support a claim.

### STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS

English Language Arts State Goal 3B, 3C, 4B, 5A, 5B, 5C

### LEARNING STYLES

Visual/Spatial

Verbal/Linguistic

Bodily/Kinesthetic

### MATERIALS

Evidence Rules

Evidence Rules Teacher Guide

Evidence Samples

Evidence Samples Key

Gun Violence Fact Sheets

Highlighters

Index cards (3 X 5)

Essay Grading Rubric

### VOCABULARY

Evidence

### ASSESSMENTS

Essay Final Draft

### ACTIVITIES

#### Anticipatory Set

- Give each student a half sheet of paper. Ask students to define the word **evidence**. Next, have students write down an example of someone who uses evidence and what the purpose of evidence is. Share and list these on the board. (examples: to prove something, to back up a claim, scientists

look for it in experiments, detectives use it to solve mysteries or crimes, lawyers use it in the courtroom, etc.)

### **Lesson:**

- **DAY ONE:** Define **evidence** as it applies to essay writing: **facts, proof, and supporting details that help strengthen a claim or form a conclusion in a piece of writing**
- Pass rough drafts of the essays on gun violence back to students and distribute highlighters.
  - Tell students to highlight the claim (argument or thesis) they are making in their essay. Tell them that this should be in the first paragraph somewhere. If students cannot identify their claim, tell them that they must add one in their revision. They may jot down a claim on their draft at this time. Remind students that without a central thesis, their essays will have no focus or purpose.
  - Next, students should highlight every piece of evidence used in their essay to support their claim. Move around the room to offer guidance at this time. Students will no doubt highlight parts of their essay that are not in fact effective pieces of evidence but that is okay at this time. If students feel they have none in their essay, they shouldn't highlight anything but note that they will learn how to use evidence through today's lesson.
  - Have students set aside these drafts to return to later.
- Distribute the handout titled "**Evidence Rules**" and read through the rules and types of evidence as a class, providing additional notes using the **Evidence Rules Teacher Guide**
- Tell students they will have the opportunity to practice identifying types of evidence.
  - In advance, prepare envelopes containing the sentence strips cut from the **Evidence Samples** handout. Put students in groups of 3-4 and give each group one envelope.
  - Students will work in their groups to identify which type of evidence each example falls under. You may wish to time students and offer a small incentive for getting all of them correct.
  - Share the correct answers and discuss. Refer to the **Evidence Samples Key**.
  - Tell students that now that they have had the opportunity to practice identifying effective evidence, they will be using their knowledge to improve their essays.
- Students should exchange their marked up essays with a classmate. Instruct them to read through the essay, paying particular attention to the highlighted portions. They should write on the draft to identify what type of evidence, if any, is used, and which rules were broken in the essay.
- Finally, explain that in order to be effective, evidence must have an explanation with it to explain how it supports the writer's claim or argument. Have students put a star next to any evidence that is missing an explanation and exchange papers back to the original writers.

### **Debrief/Assessment:**

- Conduct an informal survey by asking students to raise their hands:
  - If you need to make sure you have a solid claim for your essay?
  - If you need to use more facts and other evidence to support your claim?
  - If you need to include explanations to connect your evidence to your argument?
- Tell students that they will be spending time during the next class period revising their drafts to include effective supporting details. **Insist that every student have a solid claim for their essay by this point.**
- You may wish to have students complete this as an **exit slip** (see Resource section) to ensure each student is starting prepared for the next part of the lesson.

### **Lesson:**

- **DAY TWO:** Distribute the three gun violence fact sheets or direct students to access these at <http://www.ichv.org/facts-about-gun-violence/>
- Direct students to copy down those facts that support their claim or argument on the front side of an index card, including where the information came from. On the back of the card, students should write a sentence or two explaining the fact and how it supports their claim or argument. Once students have completed 5-8 fact cards, they should work to incorporate them appropriately into their essays.

- For older or more advanced students, use more resources in addition to the fact sheets. See the **Articles** in the **Skill Practice Activities** section of the Educator website page for anecdotal and example-based evidence.
- Once students have arranged their fact cards and had them approved by the teacher, they should complete a final draft of their essay with the supporting details incorporated.

**Debrief/Assessment:**

- After allowing students time for peer and self-revision, referring to the grading rubric, collect the final draft of student essays for a grade and for submission to ICHV's **Student Voices Contest**.

**RESOURCES:**

**What Is an Exit Slip?**

**Purpose:** To engage students in summarizing their learning

**Description:** Using this strategy, students will synthesize learned information, skills, and processes by writing an Exit Slip. An Exit Slip can be a One Sentence Summary of what students learned or can be used in a variety of other ways. Other uses are: to answer a review question, to pose a question related to the topic studied, to make a short list of facts learned, to set a learning goal for the next day, etc.

**Procedure:**

1. Prior to using the Exit Slip as a summary activity in your classroom, decide upon its purpose (including whether or not it will be used as an assessment or evaluation tool).
2. During the last 5-10 minutes of class, inform students of the purpose/task associated with their Exit Slip.
3. Tell students to take out a half-sheet of paper and complete the assigned Exit Slip.
4. As students exit your classroom that day, collect their Exit Slips as a pass out the door.
5. Review the exit slips before moving on to the next lesson and use the beginning of class the following day to clarify any incorrect or misguided understanding among students as indicated in their answers.

Hint: Exit Slips are a great way to assess your own teaching. They will often indicate whether or not students understood the presented material or whether reviewing or re-teaching is required.

**Suggestions for Extension Activities:**

1. As an additional way to introduce facts and evidence students may use in their essay, use one or more of the following lesson plans available on our website:
  - a. Walking Survey: An Introduction to the Issue of Gun Violence
  - b. Don't Become a Statistic: Gun Safety
  - c. Kids Count: Using Fractions and Percentages to Understand Gun Violence
  - d. Guns in Our World (Parts 1 and 2)