

Knowledge Library Instructional Routines

Classroom routines can support learning: They help teachers organize participation and let students know what to expect from instruction. When teachers implement appropriate routines consistently, they foster a learning environment where students feel confident, focused, and engaged.

The following routines are designed to reinforce comprehension, fluency, and critical thinking.

Use the routines consistently to provide essential practice for students who benefit from additional supports and to reinforce learning for all students.

Analyzing Media Routine

- Time: 5 minutes
- Grades: 2–5
- Target Skills: Responding, Note-Taking, Building Background

What To engage students and establish a structure and purpose for observing media critically and for academic purposes

Why Using diverse media effectively (including videos, photos, infographics, and primary sources) can help build student focus, develop background knowledge, and prepare students for critical content and language.

When Topic Launch (Topic Cards)

How Start by sharing the Topic Launch and helping students prepare for discussions with their partners.

- 1 Encourage students to jot down what they notice, feel, or wonder about the media: This may be a word, a drawing, a question, or a full sentence.
- 2 Ask students to talk with a partner for 30 seconds about what they noticed or wondered.
- 3 As students share, draw a chart on a notepad or piece of paper with the following categories: What I See, What I Wonder, What I Feel.
- 4 When the time is up, ask a few students to share their thoughts with the group.
- 5 Together, identify the best category for each student's thoughts and place them in the chart. Talk about how your chart relates to the essential question for the lesson.

Pre-Teaching Vocabulary Routine

- Time: 5 minutes
- Grades: K–5
- Target Skills: Pronunciation, Vocabulary, Comprehension

What To anchor student understanding of key academic and content area vocabulary

Why Vocabulary knowledge is foundational to comprehending and learning from texts, and it plays a significant role in helping students access and engage with complex texts across disciplines.

When Before Reading (Teacher Cards)

How Start by selecting a few vocabulary terms to review as you prepare to read a new text.

- 1 For each new term, say the word aloud clearly and slowly, and ask students to repeat it three times.
- 2 Contextualize the term within a sentence, preferably one taken from or based on the target text.
- 3 Define or explain the term briefly: You may use synonyms, shades of meaning, visual supports, or students' home languages as support.
- 4 If the term lends itself to word study, make sure to note multiple meanings, unusual spellings, etc.
- 5 Provide a sentence frame or sentence starter using the target word for students to use in pairs to orally practice and produce a new sentence.

Routine adapted from Calderón et al., 2022

Tips for Multilingual Learners

You may wish to provide activity prompts in students' home languages as needed. If students respond using their home languages, acknowledge their responses and help them transfer their ideas to English. This helps build confidence, trust, and English language proficiency.

Mini Dictation Routine

- Time: 15–20 minutes
- Grades: K–5 (with scaffolds for K*)
- Target Skills: Listening, Spelling, Writing Conventions

What To engage students in writing from dictation and practice using language conventions

Why Transcribing authentic text helps develop phonological awareness, build spelling skills, and reinforce knowledge of sentence structures, all of which foster language development and writing proficiency.

When Writing Section (Teacher Cards)

How Start by selecting familiar phrases or sentences from the target text. These may be quotes or excerpts students used as evidence in their writing.

- 1 Read aloud the phrase or sentence and discuss its meaning.
- 2 Together with students, count the number of words in the phrase or sentence and read it aloud again.
- 3 Prepare students for writing by reading word by word or phrase by phrase again, then ask students to follow you in writing.
- 4 Discuss the spelling and grammar of students' sentences together. You may wish to point out uppercase letters, descriptive words, unusual spellings, punctuation, etc.
- 5 Write the standard version of the sentence for display and ask students to copy it underneath their writing. Students should compare versions and correct their own work using a colored pencil.

* Very young students should work on single words and use letter blocks to produce their writing.

Routine adapted from Escamilla et al., 2014

Partner Read and Retell Routine

- Time: 20 minutes
- Grades: K–5 (with scaffolds for K–2*)
- Target Skills: Fluency, Reading Comprehension

What To encourage active engagement and retelling in students' own words

Why Retelling a target text allows students to process and organize information, which deepens their understanding. It also encourages active engagement with the content, supports the use of academic language and discussion, and reinforces key concepts.

When After Reading (Teacher Cards)

How Start by selecting a meaningful passage from the target text.

- 1 For each new passage, pair students across proficiency levels and instruct partners to take turns reading aloud the passage. Readers who struggle with decoding may whisper-read as readers with stronger skills read aloud.
- 2 After reading each passage, ask partners to pause and verbally retell or summarize what they read. Encourage partners to ask clarifying questions to better understand the text.
- 3 You may lead a brief, 2-minute discussion on each section for additional support, asking questions such as, *What is happening here?, How do we know who's speaking? or What is the main idea of this paragraph?*

* Young students should work with key sentences instead of paragraphs and have the sentences read aloud to them by the teacher.

Routine adapted from Calderón et al., 2022; Gottlieb, 2023

Tips for Accountable Partner Discussion

Remember to create opportunities for all learners to share ideas and practice speaking and listening conventions in a supportive environment. For example, as you engage in classroom activities, be sure to include students who are less likely to participate. Or consider writing each student's name on a card, stick, or piece of paper to select students and monitor participation. (Remember to set aside already-used names.) For further practice with academic discourse, provide discussion prompts for partners to address in "talker" and "reporter" roles.

References

Calderón, M. E., Tartaglia, L. M., & Montenegro, H. (2022). *Cultivating competence in English learners: Integrating social-emotional learning with language and literacy*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Escamilla, K., et al. (2014). *Biliteracy from the start: Literacy squared in action*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon Publishing.

Gottlieb, M. (2023). *Assessing multilingual learners: Bridges to empowerment*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Features of Creatures

Essential Question: *How do animals survive in nature?*

Topic Knowledge

Children will build knowledge about the following:

- How animals' unique features help them
- How animals stay warm
- What animals' features tell other animals
- How animals stay cool
- How animals protect themselves

Topic Launch

Share the Topic Launch video, "The Coolest Winter Adaptations," which you can find online.

Use these questions to support your discussion:

- *What can animals do to stay warm?*
- *How can animals use their features to help them hide?*
- *What do some animals do to protect themselves in winter?*
- *What did you wonder about while watching the video?*

Connect to the Essential Question Introduce the topic question that your class will discuss as you explore the topic: *How do animals survive in nature?*

Remind children that most animals live in nature, the world of the outdoors. Animals must count on themselves to survive. Animals use their own bodies to move about in their surroundings, get the food and shelter they need, and stay safe.



Topic Writing

Children write in response to the readings by following the prompts aligned to different modes of writing—narrative, opinion, and informative/explanatory.

Topic Project

You may wish to preview topic projects with children so that they can gather information as they progress through the topic.

1. Design and illustrate a new animal with unique features.
2. Make a poster that shows five animals with special features. Label each animal with its name and its special feature.
3. Make an animal feature book. Draw and label different animals that have that feature.

LIVING THINGS

Features of Creatures

Animal Characteristics

i For Your Reference

Adaptations

Animals have developed traits and behaviors that help them survive. These adaptations help them find food, water, safety, and mates. For example, a polar bear's thick fur and layer of fat under its skin are physical adaptations. These physical features help polar bears stay warm in the Arctic. Polar bears have also developed a behavioral adaptation called "still-hunting" to help them catch seals. When still-hunting, polar bears wait quietly, and when a seal surfaces to breathe, a polar bear strikes quickly.

Camouflage and Mimicry

Many animals blend into their surroundings to avoid predators. For example, stick insects have bodies shaped like twigs, making them hard to spot on a branch. Stick insects can also move from side to side to mimic twigs swaying in the wind.

Migration

As seasons change, many animals move to escape harsh conditions. For example, in autumn, monarch butterflies fly from the United States and Canada to warmer weather in Mexico. In spring, they return north to lay their eggs.

Defenses

Animals can protect themselves from threats. For example, porcupines have sharp quills that puncture a predator's skin. Armadillos have a hard shell that acts as a shield. Octopuses and squid shoot ink before swimming away from danger.

Temperature Control

Some animals can keep their bodies at a comfortable temperature. On hot days, elephants flap their big ears to create a breeze.

briefcase Career Connections

Marine Biologists are scientists that study ocean life. They observe how sea organisms behave and interact with their ocean environment.

Zoologists are scientists that study animals across different environments. They observe how animals live and find out how to protect them.

See resources online.

Revolution!

Essential Question: *What motivated people to fight for independence?*

YESTERDAY & TODAY

Revolution!

The Birth of American Democracy

Topic Knowledge

Students will build knowledge about the following:

- What caused the American Revolution and why different groups fought
- What American colonists gained from the war
- How women and enslaved people participated in the war
- What spies do and what their activities were during the American Revolution
- What everyday life was like for civilians and soldiers during the war

Topic Launch

Share the Topic Launch, which you can find online. Explain that this political cartoon from 1779 shows a horse named America throwing off its rider, King George III of Great Britain.

Set a Purpose Ask students to examine the image and jot down something they notice and/or wonder about it.

Discuss Initial Responses Have students share observations and wonderings. You may also use these questions to support and extend discussion:

- *What does the horse represent? What about the rider?*
- *What is the horse trying to do to the rider?*
- *What is the artist saying about the American colonies' feelings about King George and Great Britain?*

Connect to the Essential Question Introduce the question that your class will discuss as you explore the topic: *What motivated people to fight for independence?* Ask students to discuss their thoughts with a partner and then share with the group.

Topic Writing

Students will develop skills related to writing types, such as opinion/argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative writing, with tasks at a range of difficulty.

Topic Projects

You may wish to preview topic projects with students and encourage them to gather applicable text evidence as they progress through the topic.

1. Imagine your friend supports King George. What would you say to convince them that it's important to fight for independence? Write your argument.
2. Write letters home from a soldier fighting for the colonies or for Great Britain during the American Revolution. Describe his or her experiences.
3. Write an interview with your favorite hero of the American Revolution.



For Your Reference

What was the AMERICAN REVOLUTION?

It was a war between the 13 American colonies and Great Britain over how the colonies were treated and governed.

WHY did the war happen? The American colonists were forced to pay taxes to Britain, but the colonists had no influence in decisions made by the British king and Parliament. Colonists began to protest behind the rallying cry, "No taxation without representation." The British responded by sending troops to Boston and closing the city's port to trade. The conflict soon turned into war.

WHEN was the war fought? The first shots were fired at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, in 1775. More than six years later, the British surrendered at Yorktown.

What is the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE? It's a document announcing that the colonies were separating from Great Britain. It was written by Thomas Jefferson, listed the reasons for the separation, and accused the British king of tyranny. It begins, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...." At the time, there were nearly half a million enslaved people in the colonies.

FYI: Independence Day on July 4 celebrates the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Career Connections

See resources online.

