

## HOW TO TALK ON THE TELEPHONE

When using the telephone, hold the receiver close to your ear. The receiver is the end without the cord.



Talk directly into the mouthpiece.  
This way.



Not this way.



Not this way.

Speak in a natural, clear voice.

You do not have to shout. Speak as though the other person were in the same room.



# Writing a “How-to”

## A Versatile Form Inspires Writing across the Curriculum

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IT IS A TRUTH UNIVERSALLY ACKNOWLEDGED that we all know how to do stuff. Whether it’s tying our shoelaces, keeping a houseplant alive, spelling our names, making new friends, speaking French, or cooking spaghetti, we all know how to do something. Lots of things, in fact. Which is why, when I asked a group of fourth-graders in the Bronx to come up with topics for the how-to articles we were going to write—things that they were experts in, or that they just knew how to do—I was shocked by the responses I received.

“I don’t have anything to write about,” several students insisted.

“I don’t know how to do anything,” a few others moaned.

“Did your brother dress you and brush your teeth and chew your breakfast this morning?” I asked Angelica.

“No,” she said, smiling.

“Does your teacher do your homework for you? Or throw the baseball for you when you are the pitcher at a baseball game?” I teased Fernando.

“No way!”

“Well, then, it looks like you might actually know how to do more than you think,” I told them.

“Yeah, but we don’t know how to write it down and make it an article,” Angelica said.

I told them we could work on that part, but that the first step was just to write down at least three things that they knew how to do, or that they liked doing, or that they were good at.

The Common Core State Standards require students to take what they’ve learned in one subject and combine it with skills or knowledge from other subjects in order to reinforce learning in *all* subjects. However, its re-contextualization, re-phrasing, and re-arrangement of skills and knowledge has left many of us feeling the way my students did: as if we don’t know anything, or as if what we know doesn’t translate into what the Common Core requires. But we teachers know a lot, and meeting the Common Core standards may not be as daunting as it seems.

I teach how-to lessons a lot because they are so versatile. These how-tos can be written in the form of instructional articles, essays, recipes, poems, comic strips, or storyboards. With a little imagination, how-tos can be effectively adapted for science, social studies, history, and language arts classes. They are an excellent means of helping students to develop ordering and sequencing skills, discover and show cause-effect

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[These lessons] allow students and teachers to practice the kind of cross-curricular cross-pollination that the Common Core standards encourage. How-to lessons have Common Core written all over them!

relationships, use transitional and sequential phrasing, and ensure that students can transfer information into their own words. And they allow students and teachers to practice the kind of cross-curricular cross-pollination that the Common Core standards encourage. How-to lessons have Common Core written all over them! 🍷

## Anatomy of a How-to

*Here are the five basic steps of writing a how-to. You can write this list on the board, or print it out to distribute to students in class.*

**1. Introduction:** Every how-to exercise should begin with a few sentences about what is being taught and why. The introduction should pique readers' interest in the how-to, and entice them to keep reading.

**2. Ingredients/Materials Needed:** Have the students make a list of all of the materials needed to complete the how-to. It is often helpful to leave extra space in this list, so that overlooked materials can be added as students write the directions for their how-tos.

**3. Directions:** The descriptions of the steps for completing the how-to should be clear, concise, written in a logical order, and use effective sequencing and transitional language. Depending on the grade and subject level, teachers may want to require that a certain number of vocabulary words, mathematical and scientific concepts, historical facts, plot points, etc., be included and explained.

**4. Tips/Suggestions:** Throughout a how-to, tips for modifying the activity to suit different needs, tastes, and preferences can be given.

**5. Conclusion:** Once the directions have been given, how-tos should end with a few sentences of encouragement, and ideas about the possible outcomes, uses, or implications of the how-to.