

SAIL TO SUCCESS SERIES

WRITE YOUR WAY TO AN A* COMPOSITION

ADELINE YEO AND KELVIN LEE



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Continuous Writing Practice 2

Write a composition of at least 250 words about a dilemma you had. The pictures are provided to help you think about this topic. Your composition should be based on one or more of these pictures.

Consider the following points when you plan your composition:

- What was the dilemma?
- What was the decision made?
- What was the outcome?



!

Did you D.O.P.?

Remember to:
Define
Optimise
Plot!

Brainstorming Booster: Continuous Writing Practice 2

<p>Settings (Where and When?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Along the streets, flag day fundraiser for the Red Cross Society 	<p>Characters (Who, How, Why?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Me — well-behaved model student, vice-head prefect, competitive • Janelle — fellow schoolmate, my arch-nemesis, arrogant and loud-mouthed • Dakota — best friend, righteous, earnest • Mrs Heng — strict, no-nonsense teacher
<p>Plot (What?)</p> <p>My schoolmates and I were out on the streets participating in a flag day fundraiser as part of our Values In Action (VIA) activity and I was tempted to use money from a wallet I had picked up so that I didn't lose out to my arch-nemesis Janelle.</p>	<p>Closure (How and What?)</p> <p>I did put the money I had found into our donation tin. Then I had to resolve the problem in an embarrassing manner because I decided to own up after having made the wrong decision after facing the dilemma. However, I was glad that I did not go down the slippery slope of having to deal with being guilty for life.</p>

Super Sequencing Steps: Continuous Writing Practice 2

<p>Introduction (Beginning)</p> <p>Janelle challenges my team to collect more than her team does for the school's VIA held in collaboration with the Red Cross. True to Janelle's character, she tactlessly throws in taunts.</p>	<p>Complication (Problem)</p> <p>I ignore her comments but cannot help feeling affected by what she said. Then, I spot a thick, fat wallet on the floor.</p>	<p>Rising Action (Reaction)</p> <p>I pick it up and examine its contents with the intention of returning the wallet to its owner but when I discover ten \$50 bills along with a thick wad of \$10 bills amounting to a total of \$1080, a deceitful idea creeps into my head.</p>	<p>Crisis (Big problem)</p> <p>I am in a dilemma as to whether I should return the wallet to its rightful owner with the cash in it, or if I should place the cash into the donation tin so that I can beat Janelle and prove her wrong.</p>
<p>Climax (Highest point of a story)</p> <p>Just as I made up my mind and I head to a corner to complete the deed, my friend Dakota appears and learns of my plan. She tries to stop me but I refuse to listen to her. I hand in the donation tin after our shift ends, initially felt triumphant. However, a little voice in my head told me to heed Dakota's advice.</p>	<p>Resolution (Solution)</p> <p>Although I'd already handed the donation tin to the teacher-in-charge, Mrs Heng, I decide to own up. I had to pay the price for my folly but I was glad that I owned up lest I end up living a life of guilt.</p>	<p>Reflections (Personal thoughts/ Lessons learnt)</p> <p>On hindsight, I realised that one will always encounter times in which difficult decisions have to be made and in such times, the principles and values that we live our life by is our moral compass that will guide us in the right direction.</p>	

Danielle's Dilemma



Budding Writer's Version

Introduction

"You know you've always lost to me since we were in Primary 1 so there's no way your team will collect more than my team does for this Values-In-Action (VIA) project." Before I could say anything, she whisked away with a quick turn on her heels, followed closely by her cackling cronies.



The dialogue starter is one of the most versatile hooks to use if you're stuck! Anyone can think of dialogue that engages the reader because it happens most in our daily lives. We talk to our friends all the time and eavesdrop (unintentionally) on conversations going on around us.

Complication and Rising Action

"Idiots," I mumbled under my breath. Upset, the depressing smell of defeat loomed upon me. Then, I caught sight of a thick, fat Prada wallet along the pavement. Striding towards it swiftly, I picked it up and quickly opened the billfold wallet to find a thick wad of notes in it. Leafing through the notes and counting the money in a barely audible voice, I realised there were ten hundred-dollar notes and eight ten-dollar notes. "One thousand and eighty dollars!" I hissed, unable to contain my excitement. "I could resolve my woes with this wallet... Surely Janelle would not be able to raise half of this amount. I don't even have to use all of it," I muttered. For several brief moments, I contemplated doing the right thing. After all, the money was not mine.

Notice that the writer engages in a self-reflective process displayed by dialogue. Sometimes, students don't realise that well-crafted dialogue can be a great tool for plot development and characterisation. You don't even need to use fancy words!



Climax

Eventually, I made a swift and momentous decision to do what benefitted me. Glad that my troubles were averted by some happy stroke of fortune, I turned round the corner only to see my best friend, Dakota. “Dakota!” I yelled. I was quick to share my plan since I thought she would understand and support my plan. Alas, I was wrong.

“Danielle,” Dakota shot me a grave look. She continued, “I don’t think it is a wise idea to use money you’ve picked up. It belongs to someone and if you decide to use it, I’m not sure if I can respect you any more. But... I trust you’ll make the right decision. That’s all I will say.”

Resolution

Dakota’s words left me spinning. She was right. But how could I let such a great opportunity go? Handing in the donation tin, I was confident I had made the right choice. However, Dakota’s words rang in my mind, “I trust you’ll make the right decision.” I had passed the tin to Mrs Heng but Dakota’s words washed away the triumphant boldness I felt just minutes ago. I made a decision that surprised even myself. Marching right up to Mrs Heng, I whispered in her ear my misdeed. Initially, she gave me an ugly glare that was typical of her strict, no-nonsense self. Then, her expression softened and she dragged me to the side. Thankfully, the session ended with a stern warning not to repeat a ludicrous mistake as such ever again and a lenient decision to let me off on account of my eventual honesty.

Reflection

On hindsight, I realised that we will always encounter dilemmas in which difficult decisions have to be made and in such times, the principles and values that we live our lives by will be the moral compass that will guide us in the right direction. Thankfully, I had Dakota to remind me of that.



Ah! Danielle’s friend did not approve of her deed. Neither did she report Danielle to the teacher. In this, a plot twist is created. Remember, we always want to surprise the reader at the climax. Think of unexpected things your character or other characters would do. It’s not rocket science!

Danielle's Dilemma



Master Writer's Version

A single bead of perspiration rolled down from my left temple and I furrowed my brows at the harsh hubris spewing from Janelle's great, big mouth. "Boy, those are some thick lips. Argh! I can't stand her high, grating voice. She sounds like a crow," I muttered to myself under my breath.

Introduction



A double-hit combo! See how you can use both description and speech to create an introduction that hooks the reader? By the way, this introduction also gives you an idea of the characters and their personality... Ta-daaa! Characterisation!

Complication

"Danielle, are you deaf or dumb? Did you hear what I said? You're never going to beat me, you hear that? You might be the vice-head prefect but I don't care. My team is WA-A-AY better than yours!" She screeched hysterically, basking in her own illusions of grandiosity as I turned away from her and strode off briskly. I knew she was not pleased that I was elected as a vice-head prefect and I felt a little sorry for her. However, the competitive side of me basked in the glory of having won over my arch-nemesis so I was not too concerned about prevailing over Janelle. Yet, I could not get over what she just said. "She threw me a challenge! I can't give up without a fight!" I mumbled while pondering how I ought to defeat her. Just then, I spotted a bulky black wallet with the signature metal letter logo "Prada" embossed on its buttery soft leather.

Rising Action

Like a scavenging vulture that had just discovered carrion, I dived towards the wallet and scooped it up while taking quick furtive looks just to make sure nobody was near. Scurrying to an inconspicuous corner of the street, I flipped the wallet open with anticipation. Credit cards. Business cards. Just what I would expect in what I assumed was a wealthy person's wallet. I made a conscious decision to avoid looking for an identity card, heading straight for the note section. My eyes widened as a thick wad of blue and red dollar bills greeted me. "One... two... three... four..." I counted the bills under my breath, queasy with anticipation and dizzy with the possibility of

Crisis

What I could do with the amount of money in it. “One thousand and eighty dollars!” I hissed, doing my best to remain unheard. I wanted to be discreet but I also wanted to get the dizzying exhilaration out of my system. As instantaneously as the immoral idea popped into my head, a reasonable rejection beat it down. Should I pocket the money and place it into the donation tin or should I return it to its rightful owner and run the risk of losing to Janelle? Either option seemed terrifying and there I was, stuck in the disabling web of dilemma.

Scattered thoughts bombarded my battered brain and I had only just arrived at a decision when a sharp tap on my shoulder shattered my conviction to carry my plan through. It was Dakota, my best buddy. Why, why did she have to appear?

Climax

“What are you doing here Danielle?” she inquired innocuously. Unoffending as she was, she successfully upset my highly strung emotional state. “None of your business!” I snapped back instinctively. I was territorial and I was guarding my prey. No way was Dakota going to foil my perfect plan!

Then, Dakota became aware of the beautiful banknotes that were slightly fanned out in my hands. A sharp gasp escaped from her dainty mouth and she cupped her hand over it, as if to contain her shock. Her disbelief seemed to melt away, giving way to an expression that reeked of disgust, then disappointment. “No... no... no, Danielle. You don’t have to do this. Who cares about what Janelle thinks? Surely your conscience is worth more than that!” Dakota’s words echoed in my mind. She had a point. I did not have to cave in to Janelle’s taunts. Everyone knew what a pompous, patronising person she was. All that bravado she presented was merely an empty display of egomania. I did not have to succumb to her weakness, did I?

Climax

Slowly but surely, I turned away from Dakota. I licked my lips and proceeded to announce in a calm tone that surprised even myself, “I’ve made my decision.” At first, Dakota’s eyes shone with happiness, relief and satisfaction. Then, her eyes darted to my vice-like grip on the wallet. They gave way to dismay as her shoulders sagged and her body wilted. She then responded in an equally unfazed manner before stepping away, “It’s up to you, Danielle. I know you. I know and trust you will make the right decision eventually.”

Will Danielle return the wallet? Or not? Perhaps Danielle herself does not even know if she’s intending to return the wallet? Note that the story has been paced in such a way that the writer ponders whether to heed her friend’s advice. Meanwhile, her friend seems to reveal the writer’s decision... or not. As she walks away, there are hints that she might have cast the wrong judgement. Now, this is creating tension and suspense!



The next three hours passed, painfully. Everyone gathered, ready to hand our tins to the reputedly strict Mrs Heng. We were eager beavers, dying to be rewarded with a hard-earned compliment from Mrs Heng. At least I was. I handed my tin to Mrs Heng without any shilly-shallying. It seemed easy. It seemed easy until something hit me in my gut. “What are you doing, Danielle? Are you mad? You’re going to regret this for LIFE. Janelle is never going to let this go and you’re going to lose your post as a vice-head prefect. Maybe you’ll lose your best friend, Dakota, too!” A tiny yet penetrating voice seemed to cut through my gullible cloud of fantasy. Visceral fear struck me from deep within and as if by reflex, I leaned in towards Mrs Heng and whispered, “Actually, may I speak to you? I have something to tell you.” As Mrs Heng raised her brows, I knew I was in dire straits. Yet, I knew I had to pull myself out of the unforgiving quicksand of dishonesty before I sank beyond rescue.

Resolution

Needless to say, I paid the price for my folly and was critically chastised by Mrs Heng. Thankfully, she kept the matter under wraps and handled it with some leniency on the account that I had owned up on my own accord. The money and Prada wallet was returned to its owner, Mr Pillai. I did not know if Janelle or I had eventually won the “challenge” and I finally am not bothered by the truth either.

Reflection

On hindsight, what I am very thankful for is Dakota’s trust in me and Mrs Heng’s clemency. The incident also gave me the enlightenment that we will always encounter times in which difficult decisions are to be made. In times when dilemma strikes, the principles and values that we live our lives by will be the moral compass that will guide us in the right direction.



Bonus tip!

When you end off with a reflection, you may feel lost as to how to begin. The magic words are... ‘on hindsight’ or ‘in retrospect’. These two connectors are flags to indicate reflection or thought upon looking back at an incident.

Match the Expressions: Danielle's Dilemma

On the left are clichéd expressions typically found in students' writing. Match the clichéd expressions with alternative expressions that will help you score in your writing exams. Remember, steer clear of language that is overly simple (i.e. I was sad) or clichéd (i.e. I stood rooted to the ground) in order to clinch that distinction you're aiming for!

my eyes widened when I saw
the wallet ▶

◀ I made a decision that
surprised even myself

I decided to do something
crazy ▶

◀ like a scavenging vulture
that has just discovered
carrion

I was so excited ▶

◀ striding towards it swiftly

I was shocked ▶

◀ stuck in the disabling
web of dilemma

quickly ran to hide ▶

◀ scurrying to an
inconspicuous corner

I was very scared ▶

◀ made a swift and
momentous decision

I walked towards it quickly ▶

◀ unable to contain my
excitement

moral values teach us what
to do in life ▶

◀ Dakota's words left me
spinning

I quickly decided ▶

◀ visceral fear struck me
from deep within

I was in a dilemma and I did
not know what to do ▶

◀ principles and values
that we live our lives
by will be the moral
compass that will guide
us in the right direction

Universal Expressions: Danielle's Dilemma

Mastering the use of expressions, no matter what topic the composition is about, is a vital skill! Instead of learning 25 phrases for every composition topic, it would be more efficient to have an arsenal of phrases you can keep using regardless of the topic. In this exercise, fill in the blanks according to the instructions given in the bracket and you will see how the expressions used in the story can be used for other universal topics.

This descriptive paragraph is about _____

Like a scavenging vulture that has just discovered carrion, _____

_____ (character's reaction after finding/discovering something)

Unable to contain _____ excitement, _____
(pronoun) (character's reaction)

Striding towards _____ swiftly, _____
(pronoun) (what the character was thinking/decided to do)

_____ (Tip: You can write it in two sentences if the idea cannot be contained in one sentence.)

Scurrying to an inconspicuous corner _____
(how the character felt)

“ _____ ”
(character's reflective dialogue)

_____ pondered. Stuck in the disabling web of a dilemma, _____
(pronoun) (character's feelings)

_____. Then, _____ made a swift and momentous decision to
(pronoun)

_____. The decision to do so surprised even _____
(character's decision) (pronoun)

Visceral fear struck _____ from deep within as _____
(pronoun)

_____ (the feeling the character experiences from thinking about carrying out the decision)

ABOUT



THE RIGHT WORD

Igniting young minds

The Right Word (TRW) is an English specialist centre located at the heart of Upper Thomson Road. Since its incorporation in 2013, it has helped guide hundreds of students with a spectrum of abilities go beyond their perceived potential in English. Led by a team of passionate and experienced educators, teachers at TRW absolutely love learning, teaching and guiding youths to be their very best. The TRW team believes that all youths deserve to grow in an environment that is inclusive, engaging and enriching.

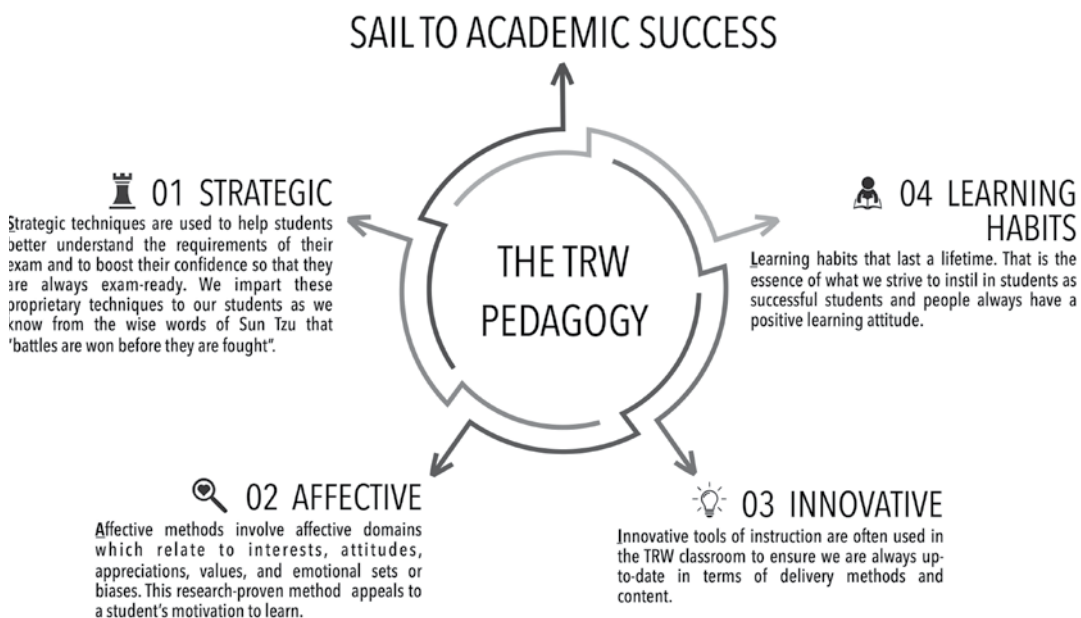
TRW's pedagogy is focused on guiding students of varied abilities to become better learners and achieve the grades they desire. Its pedagogy and curriculum is backed by research projects to innovate teaching methodology, shaped by heart-to-heart talks with students, and is proven by a track record of transformational results. With an unwavering focus on their mission to improve students' abilities to acquire and apply knowledge, the TRW team has developed the SAIL approach. The SAIL (Strategic Affective Innovative Learning) approach helps students cruise ahead on a successful and enriching learning journey. And that, is how the team helps every student ace his or her exams.

The SAIL Approach: An Enriching Journey Towards Academic Success

As passionate and experienced educators, the team at The Right Word (TRW) understands the need to thrive and flourish in a competitive academic climate. At the same time, TRW knows that what gears students towards success in life encompasses an attitude that is always hungry for knowledge and development. As such, the TRW team has devised the SAIL approach to teaching so as to cater to every student and groom him or her to break through to his or her perceived potential.

The SAIL Approach has been conceived through research workshops and research projects. Through the journey of their Masters education and the many years of experience they have collected teaching students, the team has put together an approach proven to inculcate inquisitive and motivated students who have a zest for success in academic endeavours and in life. The dynamic SAIL approach constantly innovates and adapts to the seas of change that students are subjected to in this highly-globalised and competitive society.

Here's how the TRW team SAILS towards the zenith of their students' academic potential:



Strategic techniques are used to help students better understand the requirements of their exam and to boost their confidence so that they are always exam-ready. The TRW team imparts these proprietary techniques to their students as they know from the wise words of Sun Tzu that “battles are won before they are fought”.

Affective methods involve affective domains which relate to interests, attitudes, appreciations, values and emotional sets or biases. This research-proven method appeals to a student’s motivation to learn.

Innovative tools of instruction are often used in the TRW classroom to ensure they are always up-to-date in terms of delivery methods and content.

Learning habits that last a lifetime. That is the essence of what they strive to instil in students as successful students and people who will always have a positive learning attitude.

It is with the SAIL approach that students have enjoyed the fruits of their labour and the TRW team has manifested their mission — helping every student ace his or her exams.

What Students and Parents Say About Teachers at The Right Word

“I have learnt a lot from you and I improved from a B to an A! You guided me when I needed help and let me realise that EL can be so easy! I am very confident in doing EL worksheets now! I know that I can improve more to get an A when I am in Secondary school by using your methods.”

— **Zacchaeus Go**

“You rock to the max! I love my lessons with you! I learn many things (such as techniques to score better in comprehension [main idea] and to always check G.P.S.!) You are the funniest EL coach ever! I’ve always loved English but now I love it even more! Thank you, Adeline!”

— **Isabelle Yuen**
Kong Hwa School

“You are the most awesome teacher/coach I have ever encountered! Thanks to you, my grades improved greatly from 50+ to 70+! Thanks!”

— **Abigail Faith Png**
Paya Lebar Methodist Girls’ School

“I have learnt a lot from your teaching, I have improved a lot from 48 to 86. You guided me since the beginning of the year. Now I am very confident in English. You are the best coach! Thanks for your help.”

— **Timothy Thamrun**
River Valley Primary School

“Adeline is able to guide the students through their work patiently. She also makes an effort to understand each student’s strength and weakness, likes and dislikes, which will help her better in coaching the student. After attending Adeline’s class for a month, Clarine is now able to complete her open-ended comprehension questions without much/any help. In addition, her comprehension cloze has also improved — from more than five blanks to almost none. It’s a great improvement!”

— **Mrs Catherine Ling,**
Mother of Clarine Ling

“When I started lessons in June 2011, my SA1 grade was C5. After lessons with Mr Kelvin Lee, my grades improved to B3 for my SA2 for English. He is strict with me when I do not do my work, and rewards me when I do my work well. He spurs me on to greater heights in my English like teaching me how to express myself properly in the English which helped me in my oral exams. I also improved in my creative writing and comprehension skills. Thank you Mr Lee!”

— **Joel Ting**

Fairfield Methodist School (Secondary)

“I started tuition with Mr Lee on 26 May 2011, after my SA1 where I scored Band 2 for my English. After half a year with Mr Kelvin Lee, I improved to a Band 1 for my SA2. I’m grateful to him for helping me to improve in my English. He imposes a lot of discipline during the lesson, but does provide real-life anecdotes at times to make lessons interesting. Sometimes, he teaches overtime either to ensure the work is done during lessons before examinations or just to make sure I understand something. Thank you Mr Kelvin Lee!”

— **Andrew Ting**

Fairfield Methodist School (Primary)

“Thank you for offering a reading session with him. You are a devoted educator and I really need help to make Mauern move forward faster. I can see Mauern himself is willing and looking forward to attend your class. Thanks for taking care of Mauern’s interests and attending to his needs!”

— **Mdm Celyna Khoo,**

Mother of Mauern Lee,

Nanyang Primary School

“The lessons at The Right Word are really different compared to other tuition centres! The tutors are committed and students who are at different levels are able to learn together as the classes are very guided to ensure that no one is lost or unable to follow the pace of the class. The materials provided by the centre are creative and original. They are created with the aim of equipping students to be exam-ready and be connected to current affairs at all times. Enrolling into this centre is probably one of the best choices I’ve made as the tutors at The Right Word really care about me and strive to help me improve my grades. I am very glad to have aced my tests since secondary school! More importantly, I don’t just learn things that are related to academics, but also values that help shape me

into a better person. Without attending classes at The Right Word, I think I would not be able to fully realise my strengths and weakness. While learning how to maximise my strengths, I've also learnt how to improve in many ways to make up for the weaknesses that I have.”

— **Megan Lee**
Nanyang Girl's High School

“I started attending tuition when I was in Primary 3. The lessons are enjoyable, fun-filled in a conducive environment. Animations, videos and short films are used for a better understanding of the lesson objective. When I was going to write a composition on filial piety, Adeline showed me a clip on filial piety to let me understand the topic much more and I was able to write my composition with a clearer perspective. My English grades improved tremendously after attending tuition at TRW and I guess if I did not attend classes here, I would have failed my English.”

— **Morgan Lee**
Hwa Chong Institution

“I think the current affairs piqued her interest. Cloze and Comprehension [exercises] were also her favourite components as they were interesting and as such, benefitted her most. Teacher Adeline is young, adventurous and knows students well. Maxine is more determined if she likes a lesson by the teacher so Adeline's bold jokes never fail to amaze her. Thank you for being approachable too. Keep it up!”

— **Mdm Peh Ling Ling,**
Mother of Maxine Zeng

“I have improved by 14.5 marks. [Adeline] is very cheerful and knows how to talk to kids like us so we will listen. The lessons are also very interesting.”

— **Amelia Loh**
Poi Ching School