

The Advice Expert

GRADE LEVELS

K–5 (scaffolded for K–2 and 3–5)

DURATION

45–50 minutes

SUBJECT

Language Arts / Vocabulary Reinforcement

WRITING TYPE

Narrative frame (two-voice writing: problem letter + expert reply)

VOCABULARY

List provided in the Teacher Toolkit.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Narrative and opinion writing with a strong vocabulary and perspective-taking component.

- CCSS W.K.1 / W.1.1 / W.2.1 for K–2 (opinion with support)
- W.3.1 / W.4.1 / W.5.1 for 3–5 (opinion/argument with reasoning)
- L.3–5.6 for vocabulary.

On writing type: The advice column is written as a narrative with characters, a scenario, and a voice. The expert reply focuses on the opinion and argument standards

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

K–2: Students will write and illustrate an expert reply to a shared class “problem letter,” using at least 2 vocabulary words from the list provided in the Teacher Toolkit.

3–5: Students will independently write both a problem letter (using 2–3 vocab words) and an expert reply (using at least 4 additional vocab words), demonstrating understanding of the topic through reasoned, narrative advice.

MATERIALS

Prep ahead: Have an example of an advice column ready before class, such as the sample problem letter provided in the Warm Up below or another age appropriate example of your choice.

K-2:

- Class-generated “problem letter” displayed on chart paper or board (written together during mini-lesson)
- Response drawing/writing template (“Dear Expert, I think you should _____. Here’s why: _____. One important thing to know is _____.”)
- Word bank with illustrations
- Crayons/pencils

3-5:

- Lined paper or two-section template (Problem Letter / Expert Reply)
- Vocabulary list provided in your Teacher Toolkit (see: Vocabulary Connection)
- Optional anchor chart showing advice column format (opening / problem description / closing plea)
- Optional examples of screened, kid-friendly advice column formats for context

VOCABULARY CONNECTION

This format is particularly effective because students practice vocabulary from two perspectives. They first write as the confused “asker” who does not fully understand the word, then as the knowledgeable “expert” who explains it. This approach encourages a deeper understanding of vocabulary and works well with any topic.

Word bank size: The suggested targets of 2 to 3 vocabulary words in the letter and 4 additional words in the reply assume students are working from a list of at least 7 vocabulary words. If your vocabulary list is smaller, consider reducing the number of words required in the reply or allowing students to reuse words.

SUGGESTED TIMING

SEGMENT	TIME
Warm-Up	5 min
Mini-Lesson	10 min
Guided Practice	15 min
Independent Work	15 min
Closure	5 min

Lesson Sequence

WARM-UP (5 MIN)

Introduce the advice column format. Read a funny, relatable, non-topic example to familiarize students with the format. Someone has a problem, an expert writes back with help. A ready-to-use example:

Dear Advice Expert,

My little brother copies everything I do. If I wear red, he wears red. If I get pizza, he gets pizza. Yesterday he asked for the exact same haircut as me! I love him, but I want to be my own person. What should I do?

—Copied in Cleveland

Steer students toward the idea that good advice uses real knowledge and specific details. Today, they're the experts. Tailor the framing question by grade:

3–5: "What makes advice useful? What if the expert doesn't really know what they are talking about — how can you tell?"

K–2: "Would you rather get help from someone who really knows about this, or someone who's just guessing? How can we tell someone really knows?"

MINI-LESSON (10 MIN)

K–2: Write a class "problem letter" together on the board. Keep it simple, related to the **show topic**, and in first person: "Dear Expert, I am a tooth and I am very scared. Something sticky has been sitting on me for days and I don't know what to do. Can you help? Sincerely, Worried Tooth." Read it together. Ask students: what does this tooth need to know? What words from our unit might help explain it? Finally, model how to begin an expert reply: "Dear Worried Tooth, Don't panic! What you're describing sounds like plaque..." Underline the vocab word.

3–5: Show a brief example of both parts of the advice column: the problem letter and the expert reply. The problem letter should be written from the perspective of someone who does not fully understand the topic and may use a few vocabulary words incorrectly. The expert reply should correct those misunderstandings and use additional vocabulary to explain the concepts clearly. Then discuss: How does the expert's voice sound different from the asker's? What makes the reply trustworthy?

Guardrail: If the asker intentionally misuses a vocabulary word, make sure the expert reply clearly identifies the mistake and explains the correct meaning. This helps prevent students from remembering the incorrect definition.

GUIDED PRACTICE (15 MIN)

K–2: As a class, brainstorm advice for the worried tooth. Invite students to share their ideas while recording a few responses on the board. Together, identify vocabulary words that should be included in the advice. Then, have students create their own responses by drawing what they would tell the tooth and completing the sentence frames.

3–5: Students plan their problem letter first — who is writing, what is their problem, which vocab words show up (even if used imperfectly by the “asker”)? Then, they plan the reply — who is the expert, what do they know, how will they use the vocab words to explain the problem and solution?

INDEPENDENT WORK (15 MIN)

K–2: Students complete their response drawing and sentence frames. Prompt students who finish early to add another detail: “What else would you tell that worried tooth? Is there another word from our list that might help?”

3–5: Have students write both parts of the advice column. Encourage them to give their characters names and personalities to make the writing more engaging and encourage stronger vocabulary use. Remind them: the problem letter uses 2–3 vocab words, while the reply uses at least 4 more or defines a misused word from the first letter correctly.

If time runs short: have 3–5 students prioritize the expert reply — that’s where the real vocabulary work happens — and finish the problem letter the next day. Fifteen minutes is tight for two full pieces, so plan for some writers to carry over.

CLOSURE (5 MIN)

Ask for one or two volunteers to share their work. After hearing it, ask the class whether the expert’s reply actually explained the topic. This is a great moment to distinguish between using a word and understanding a word:

K–2: “Did the expert know how to solve the problem? Which word showed us they knew?”

3–5: “Did the vocab words help the advice make sense, or did they feel forced?”

Assessment

K–2: Look for a logical response to the problem, a drawing that connects to the advice being given, and at least 2 vocab words used with reasonable meaning. The sentence frames should be completed in a way that shows comprehension, not just word-filling.

3–5: Evaluate both pieces. The problem letter should establish a scenario and include 2–3 vocab words (correct or slightly uncertain usage is fine). The reply should demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic through the expert’s advice and use at least 4 additional vocab words in context. Look especially for whether students explained the concept through the story, not just stated definitions.



REFLECTION PROMPTS

1. *Which students wrote advice that was genuinely accurate versus superficially confident?*
 2. *Where did the two-voice format expose a gap — what did the expert replies reveal about what students actually understand?*
 3. *What topic misconceptions surfaced that I'll want to address in the next lesson?*
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