



Student Workbook | Blogs

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Blog #1 | Letter of Introduction

Think and Take Notes

How do you think the people you love describe you when they speak of you? What are some details about you that are unique? Are you always the center of attention or do you tend to be an observer, jumping into action when the moment is right? Is your family eccentric or conservative? There are so many details that make us unique individuals. You will be choosing a few of those details about yourself to include in this letter of introduction.

Write a list of elements from your life (an idea web might be helpful). Possible elements include hobbies, family, friends, school, pets, etc. Strands from your idea web might look like these:

Family — Dad — Bus Driver — Sings a lot — always smiling

Pets — Chloe — Pug — White — sneezes a lot — falls to sleep with a toy in her mouth after eating

Write

Describe yourself to your blogging group. Be sure to include interesting details that paint a vivid picture of your life.

Length: 200-250 words

Bad Example:

My name is Joe and I am in tenth grade. I go to Gunn High School in Palo Alto. My favorite subject is social studies.

I live with my mother and father and our dog, Chloe. My mother is a crossing guard and my father is a bus driver.

My favorite sport is golf.

Good Example:

My name is Joan and I am in tenth grade. I go to Gunn High School in Palo Alto, which is in the Silicon Valley where computers were invented. I always look forward to social studies where we are studying ancient history. My teacher likes to set up simulations so we feel like we're in the ancient civilization that we're learning about.

When I'm not at school I'm usually spending time with my family. I live with my mother and father and our dog, Chloe. My mother is a crossing guard at the elementary school that I went to. When I was in elementary school she used to cross my friends and me. Because she is so friendly and well liked she always gets bags full of presents at the end of the school year. My dad is a bus driver who always welcomes his passengers with a smile. Most conversations my dad has remind him of a song and he very frequently sings them. Chloe is a pug who is constantly sneezing. She has the adorable habit of falling to sleep with a stuffed toy in her mouth after dinner.

In my spare time I like to play golf. I started playing two years ago, although it often feels like I started yesterday. I like to remind myself that it doesn't matter how well I play as long as I'm having fun. Sometimes I actually believe that.

Blog #2 | Keepsakes and Heirlooms

Think and Take Notes

Do you still have your first stuffed animal? Do you save items like ticket stubs from movies or souvenirs from vacations? Keepsakes like these help us remember special moments in our lives. Maybe your family has items that are so special they are passed down each generation. Those items are heirlooms. Physical objects can become very meaningful when they have certain memories or stories attached to them. Think of all the memories and stories that are triggered when looking at a photo album.

Write a list of all of the keepsakes and/or heirlooms you will hold on to for a long time. Think about why you hold on to each of these items. Remember: these items do not have to be of monumental importance. They are just items you save for one reason or another. The possibilities are endless.

Write

What object holds the most meaning for your life? What will you keep for as long as you live, carefully boxed and moved from place to place as situations in your life change? Write about the object and be sure to tell the story of WHY it is important.

Length: 200-250 words

Example:

My most important possession is a blanket that my grandmother knitted me. She is very skilled at knitting and the blanket has lots of sentimental value to me. She made it in many shades of blue, which is my favorite color. She has made one for everyone in our extended family. She has you pick out the yarn you want and adds a personal and loving touch for everyone. When I'm older I will always keep and remember this blanket because it is useful, yet it has sentimental value. My children and children's children will be able to share my love for my grandma. This is a way for me to always remember her.

Blog #3 | A Special Place In My Community

Think and Take Notes

What gives a community its character? When we travel we tend to go to museums and historically significant monuments. Is that what defines the culture of an area? What other types of places might be important to visit? What types of places reveal the character of a town?

What is a place that you always look forward to going to? If possible, go to this place and take some notes in your ethnographer's notebook. Write down the first thing that grabs your attention (this could be a piece of furniture, a plant, a person...). Then describe the whole place. How big is it? What do people do there? Is it crowded or peaceful? What do you smell...hear...feel? Remember these are notes and do not have to be perfect. Write out your ideas without worrying about correctness.

Write

Describe a place in your community that you would take someone to if they came to visit. What makes this place interesting or important? What does it say about your hometown or country? Why do you like it? Include all the details you can.

Length: 200-250 words

Example:

If someone came to visit my community I would be sure to take them to the farmer's market. Most of the people in my community buy food at big supermarkets. My family shops at supermarkets quite often, but once a month we go to the farmer's market downtown. Instead of buying food from who knows where, we are buying food grown close to home.

Life seems to slow down at the farmer's market. People take their time selecting the best apples and smelling the fresh flowers. I love browsing through all of the locally grown fruits and vegetables and meeting the people who bring them from their farms...

Blog #4 | Storytelling

Think and Take Notes

Family stories can be funny or sad, about recent events or the faraway past. They can be love stories, adventure stories, or stories about embarrassing events. How did your parents or grandparents meet? What was a huge challenge that your family faced? Is there one person in your family who is always the subject of a story? What stories does your family tell about you?

This is the perfect opportunity to get your ethnographer's notebook out and interview members of your family. Talk with your parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles. Ask them what their favorite family stories are.

Take a few notes about each story that you think of. Who usually tells each story and on what occasion. Is it a bedtime story? Is it told at large family gatherings during the holidays?

	Story	Usual Teller	Occasion
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Write

Choose your favorite story to write out in detail. You may record a family member telling this story and write it out word for word. Pay special attention to voice and personality in this essay.

Note: Be sure to use dialogue when possible.

Bad Example:

My mother was angry with my brother.

Good Example:

My mother screamed at my brother, "Get down here this instant and clean up this mess!"

Blog #5 | Evening Meals

Think and Take Notes

Each family has unique practices surrounding their evening meal. Sometimes a parent prepares the meal, sometimes a child cooks, and sometimes it's a group effort. Some households eat takeout on paper plates and others eat a carefully prepared meal on good dishes. Some families eat together at a table, while others sit on the couch and watch television. Do any of these descriptions sound like your family?

Observe your family carefully one evening and take notes on what you see. Try to be as detailed as possible. These notes will help you write this week's blog

Write short responses to the following questions:.

Who normally prepares dinner where you live?

What kind of food do you normally eat?

What happens in the kitchen while food is being prepared?

Is the food fresh or packaged?

Where does your family eat the food?

What do you drink with dinner?

Write

Choose your favorite story to write out in detail. You may record a family member telling this story Using your notes and responses to the above questions, describe a typical evening meal at your home. Describe the setting for your evening meal. Who is usually present? Are there any traditions associated with your meal? What types of foods are there? How is the meal prepared?

Blog #6 | Where I Live

Think and Take Notes

The appearance of our homes can say a lot about us. The way we choose to decorate, the objects we surround ourselves with, how neat or messy we are; all of these things inform an observer about a family. Is your home always perfectly clean and disinfected, or would a visitor find a layer of dust on the bookshelf and last night's dishes in the kitchen sink? Is your living room furniture modern and sleek, or does your family prefer antique furniture? Does everything match, or is the décor in your house totally random?

What about your room? Is everything organized, or do you have trouble finding your socks in the morning?

Write a few notes about the following parts of your home. Remember to include interesting sensory details. Usually we focus on what we can see, but pay attention to sounds, textures, smells, and tastes. Also, describe details about your home that people might not notice at first.

Living area

Outside

Kitchen

Bedrooms

Write

Describe the house or apartment that you and your family live in. Describe each room in detail, including your personal room if you have one. If you live at school for most of the year, use as many details as possible to describe your dorm room.

Blog #7 | My Immediate Family

Think and Take Notes

This week you will be interviewing the members of your immediate family. You probably already know many things about your family, but when you interview them they will be able to provide you with details about their lives that you wouldn't think of on your own. You might already know that your mother works at a technology company, but you might not know how she spends her day and what her specific responsibilities are. They and they will also teach you interesting things about your family.

The first thing you need to do is develop a list of questions for each person that you need to interview. You are interested in stories and details, so make sure that the questions you write will prompt long answers.

Example Question: Where did you grow up?

Better Question: Describe the area you grew up in.

Example Question: Do you have any hobbies?

Better Question: What do you like to do in your spare time?

During the interview be sure to listen and think of new questions based on the answers you get to your prepared questions. The interview should be like a conversation instead of a series of questions and answers.

Develop some questions for each member of your family:

Name _____

Name _____

Name _____

Write

Paint a portrait of your immediate family with words. What do they look like? Where were they born? What are their names? What occupations or activities do they do? What hobbies do they like to do? What is something unique or special about them?

Blog #8 | Generational Change

Think and Take Notes

Every generation is different from the last. In the last blog you wrote about your family. But how were things different for your parents when they were your age? For example, your generation uses technology that your parent's generation did not use. Transportation, music, education, and politics are a few of the areas that tend to change from generation to generation. Can you think of other areas?

Interview one of your parents to find out how their life was when they were your age. Develop some questions to ask them about their childhood using the following categories. Feel free to add categories of your own.

Transportation:

1. How did you get to school?
2. How did your family travel for vacations?
3. _____
4. _____

Music:

1. How did you listen to music?
2. What kind of music did you listen to?
3. _____

Politics:

1. Were there any wars that affected your life?
2. Who were the most powerful government leaders when you were my age?
3. _____

Education:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Write

How is your life different from your parents' lives? Talk to your parents about their experiences and use your own memories to describe the changes. Make sure to compare the following things in your life to your parents' lives: how people communicate, where they live (city/country), what technology they use, what jobs they do, etc.

Blog #9 | Family Rules

Think and Take Notes

No fighting, no yelling, no swearing, no lying, clean your room, don't talk with your mouth full, hats off indoors, no jumping on the furniture.... Are some of these rules you have to follow at home? Are the consequences for some of these rules more severe than the consequences for others? Maybe nothing really happens if you don't clean your room, but if you swear you are severely punished. Will you have these rules when you are a parent?

Make a list of all of the rules that you have to follow at home. Show the list to your family, they might be able to think of more. Discuss the reasons for the rules and which rules are the most important to follow.

Rule	Reason for Rule	Importance of Rule <i>(Strict Rule/Mild Rule/Gentle Rule)</i>

Write

Describe some of your family's rules. Who makes the rules where you live? What are some of the rules and the consequences for breaking them? Do you consider the rules strict or relaxed? Will some of the rules change when you get older? What rules do you like or dislike?

Blog #10 | My Hopes and Dreams for the Future

Think and Take Notes

Some people have a very clear idea about what their future will be like while others have no idea. Some people know they will take over the family business or have always known that they want to be a doctor. Other people can see themselves doing any number of things in the future. What sounds more like you?

Think about where you will be in twenty years. Will you have a family? Did you go to college? What is your occupation? Where do you live? What are your hobbies? Did you learn another language or how to play the guitar? You may decide to write about some or all of these questions in this week's blog.

Write

What dreams or plans do you have for the future? This can include ideas for college or university, the perfect job, or a long-term goal that you may have.

Super Blog Handout | Optional for Video Exchanges

Think and Take Notes

Each week you are writing blogs about topics given to you by the teacher. This project will give you the opportunity to show your partners abroad whatever you want about life in your country. Make sure that you select a topic that requires some research and allows you to go in depth. It should take you many hours to complete this project. Each of you should research your topic and write at least 1000 words about it. Your group will also need to include at least 5 pictures. Use this page to plan your project. Figure out what topic you will research, what you will say about it, and how you will divide the work among the group.

Example Topic: Food

How do people where you live typically purchase the food that they eat? Where does the food come from? Is it locally grown or shipped from far away? How does it get to the store or restaurant that sells the food? What types of food are common in the area you live in?

Our Group's Topic: _____

Some questions we will answer about our topic: *(These questions should require research)*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

The questions I am responsible for researching:

1. _____

2. _____

