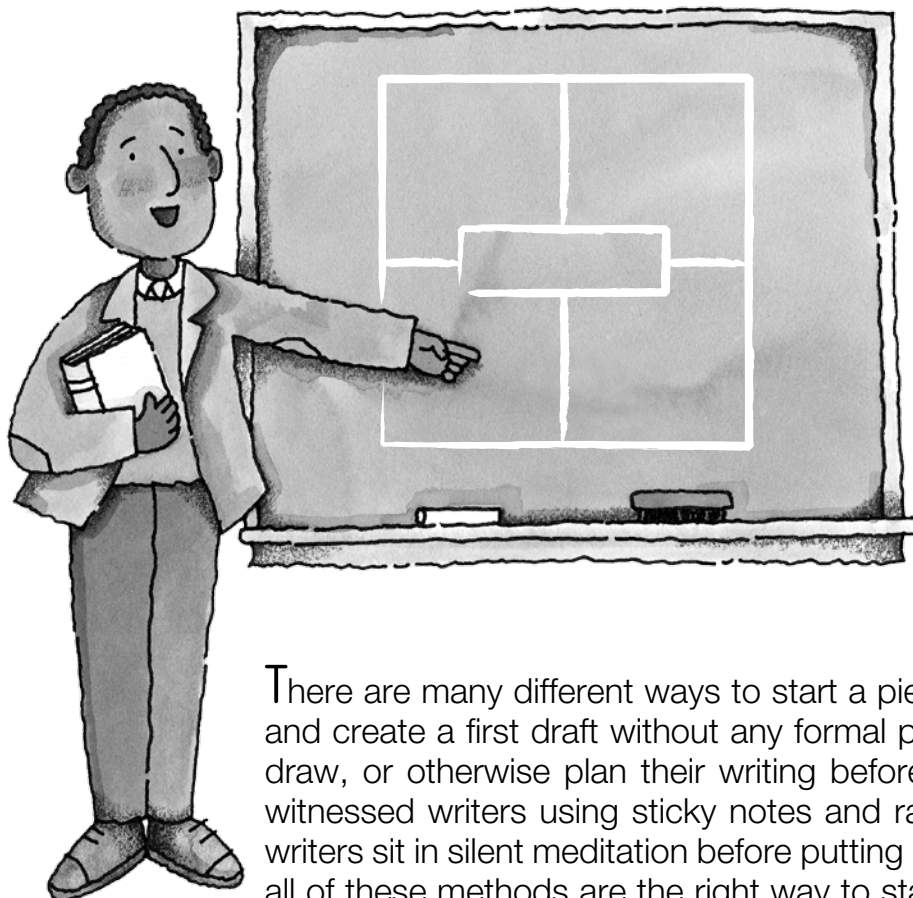


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Preface



There are many different ways to start a piece of writing. Some dig right in and create a first draft without any formal pre-writing. Others web, outline, draw, or otherwise plan their writing before beginning a first draft. We've witnessed writers using sticky notes and random paper scraps and other writers sit in silent meditation before putting pencil to paper. The truth is that all of these methods are the right way to start a piece of writing.

When it comes to the writing assessment, however, we often do not have time for the flexible approaches that work well in the collaborative environment of the writing classroom. On assessment day, we cannot confer with students, and students cannot assist one another. The writer must have a method to deliver their best writing on demand. That writing needs to be organized, focused, detailed, and engaging. The writer needs a plan on assessment day, and we believe that the Four Square plan is the best way to get the job done.

The Four Square was designed to be a starting place for writing. Using the Four Square tool will help writers organize and brainstorm in a hurry, allowing for the time and attention that well-crafted, detailed writing deserves. Once the initial draft is completed, writers need concrete strategies to do the work of reviewing and revising the writing. The three-step revision method is flexible yet concrete. Provide your writers with the tools they need, practice using them, and you are on your way to assessment success!

Learning the Four Square for Informational Writing

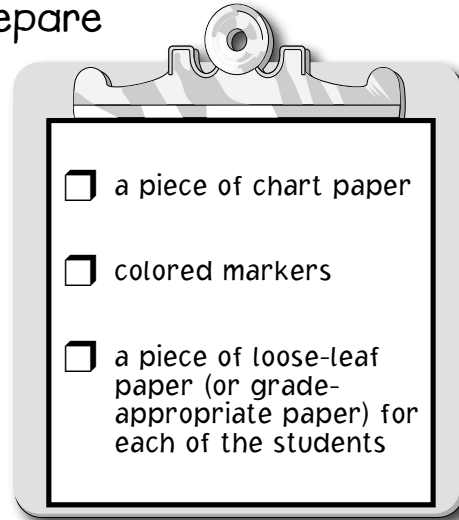


Reminders

Here are some reminders before you begin. Four Square...

- is a tool, a web on folded paper
- strengthens structure, which helps with organization and memory
- is a map for ideas, words and phrases
- can be used with all language levels, from emerging to proficient
- is great for visual learners
- begins with folding paper into four squares

Prepare



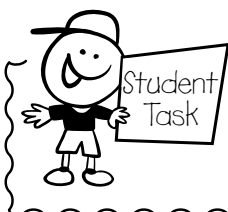
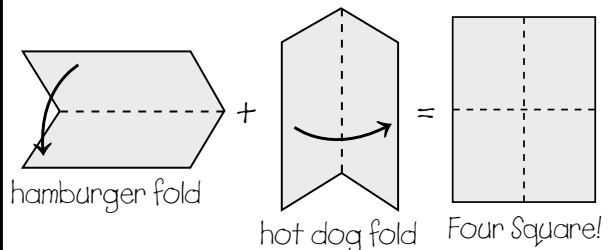
Getting Started



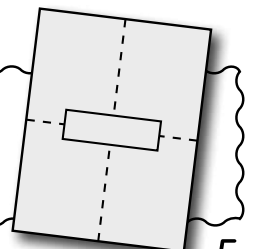
Say to the students, “Sometimes getting started is the hardest part of writing. Today we are going to learn something that will help us get started in our writing.” Tell the students you are going to learn how to use a Four Square. “When you go on a trip, you need a map because it shows you the way to go. A Four Square is like a map or set of directions for the ideas and thoughts you have for writing.”

Illustrations

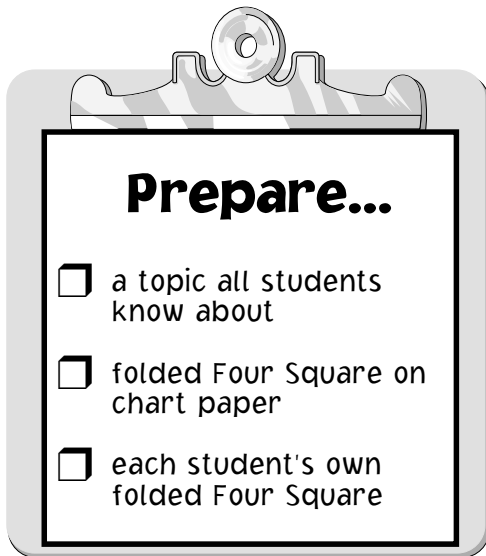
Get out the chart paper and fold it in front of the kids. To make a Four Square, you need to make two hamburger folds (or you could do a hot dog and a hamburger) on the paper. Open it up—what do you see? Now you know where the name *Four Square* came from!



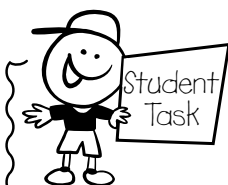
Have the students fold their own papers. Assist where needed. Instruct the students to unfold their papers and draw a box in the middle of their Four Squares, as shown. Check students' work before moving on.



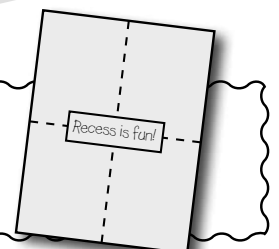
Brainstorming Using a Four Square



Choose a topic to demonstrate in front of the class. With a colored marker, model writing the topic in the middle box. The topic used throughout the example given is *Recess is fun!* Remind students that the topic is what they will be writing about.



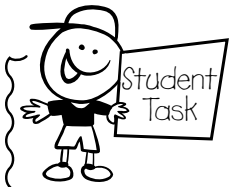
Have the students fill in the middle squares of their Four Squares. Check before moving on.



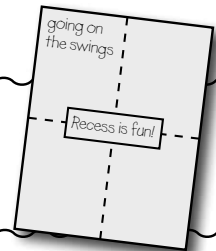


Show the students that there are four squares in which to put ideas. You want to put different ideas in **three** of the squares that relate to the topic. Some ideas may include *going on the swings*, *playing on the monkey bars*, and *playing tag*. Volunteer some non-examples, like *eating pizza* or *taking care of my baby brother*, to illustrate the importance of staying on topic.

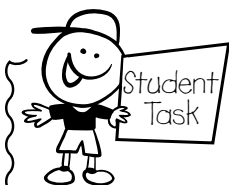
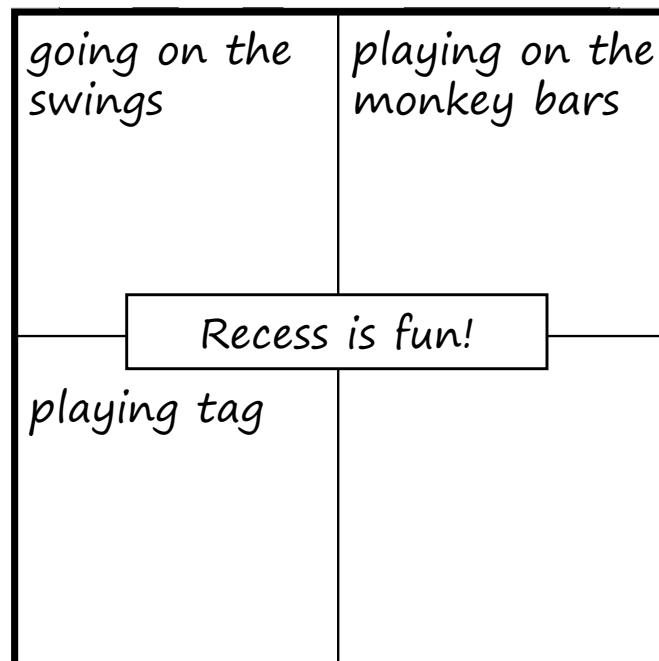
On your chart, choose one idea to write in the upper-left square of the Four Square. Write the idea at the top of the square. Show the students how to write the first idea as a short phrase and not as a complete sentence. For example, you would write *going on the swings* instead of *I like going on the swings when I am on the playground*. Explain that since the Four Square is a map or plan, they can write in phrases to help them remember what the complete sentence will be.



Have the students add the first idea to their Four Square. Check before moving on.



Repeat this step in the upper-right and lower-left squares of the Four Square. You should have three main ideas (*going on the swings*, *playing on the monkey bars*, and *playing tag*) in these three squares.



Have the students fill in these squares on their own Four Squares. Check before moving on.

