

The Skills Exchange

Whether you feel like the best or the worst writer in class, I'm sure you can talk, with competence and confidence, about the skill it takes and the pleasure it gives you to do and be something else. So I invite you to share your enthusiasm for doing and being something you enjoy.

Just present yourself, in writing, in a role that permits you to talk about whatever you know and do best. As everybody in the class participates in this skills exchange, you're continuing the getting acquainted conversations suggested on pages 47-48. Or, from a more academic perspective, you're moving on to the next lesson in interpersonal communication, or carrying your informal study of a particular audience a little further. Whatever language you prefer, here's your opportunity to introduce yourself as a skillful person by talking on paper for a few pages about something you know and enjoy.

For example: The old-fashioned board game of your childhood days, or the latest version of your favorite electronic competition. The child game you loved best. Or the games you love to play with your children. Or the ones you've played while babysitting. The musical instrument, or athletic game, you play every chance you get. The singing or dancing or acting that delights you. The fishing that takes you to a promising body of water, the hunting that takes you to open field or the woods.

With the sound of your voice on paper, take your classmates with you to a place where you've spent many happy hours doing something you enjoy doing. Were you surrounded by the comforts of a family room, or the excitement of a club or gym? Or maybe you remember being all alone, practicing for a concert, or memorizing your lines before the first rehearsal. Whatever your choice, let your readers see what happens, on stage and backstage; while casting out and reeling in, while stalking your prey before sunup and after sundown. Let your readers see you showing off, or simply enjoying, the continuing development of your competence.

If my first suggestions sound frivolous to your studious ears, consider the possibility of talking about: The useful or beautiful, the useful and beautiful, things you enjoy making with your own skillful hands. Like the needlework that keeps you or somebody else warm, or something that adds an artistic touch to the place you call home. Your collection of stamps, or baseball cards, or antique cruets, and the purchase or trades you make to expand your collection. Or you may want people to know that you are: An ambitious, if not brilliant computer hacker. A collector of clothes and jewelry that reflect the latest fashion or express your own personal style. A mechanic with the skill and expertise it takes to keep your new motorcycle in top condition, or to extend the active life of your old clunker. Maybe your attention and affection are lavished upon your garden, either veggie or floral. Or you love to bake bread, or prepare delicious snacks and gourmet dinners.

Whatever you choose to talk about, whatever skill you always enjoy, let your readers see you showing off your expertise. After participating in this exchange, after listening to each others' writing, you'll all know each other a little, maybe a lot, better. Or, in more academic terms, as readers, you will have gained new appreciation of the interpersonal functions of writing; as writers, you will have gained new knowledge of the audience of readers you are expected to address as you continue writing for your class.