Small Fixes, Clear Voice

Explore how word choice gives an explanation a distinct voice.

9-10.W.2.e "Establish a clear voice."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one phrase in each paragraph that helps the writer sound practical but hopeful. Number the phrases 1, 2, and 3 so you can use them in your answers.

A Place for Small Repairs

1. On a rainy Monday, the lost-and-found bin held three jackets with missing buttons and a backpack with a split seam. None of these things was finished; each needed a small fix. A school repair shelf could offer needles, thread, spare buttons, and clear directions beside the bin. Students could take an item home to repair it or ask a volunteer for help during lunch. This is not a grand plan to save every object on Earth. It is a way to keep a useful jacket useful, which seems like a good place to start.

2. Simple repairs also teach a skill that does not come with a new purchase. When a button falls off, the choices should not be "buy another coat" or "hope nobody notices." A student who learns to sew it back on can make a small decision without waiting for a replacement. The shelf would need rules: keep sharp tools in a supervised box, ask permission before fixing someone else's belongings, and leave complicated repairs to someone with experience. Good intentions are helpful, but they are no substitute for careful hands and a clear plan.

3. A repair shelf would not solve the larger problem of waste. It would not even guarantee that every jacket in the bin finds its owner. Those limits matter because an honest proposal should say what it can actually do. The shelf could make a few repairs possible, give students a chance to learn, and keep usable belongings in circulation a little longer. Next time a button disappears, the first question might be "Where is the thread?" rather than "Where is my wallet?" That small change in the question is the point.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, how does the phrase “a good place to start” shape the writer’s voice?

2. Why does the writer contrast “buy another coat” with “hope nobody notices” in paragraph 2? What does that choice add to the voice?

3. How does the sentence beginning “Good intentions are helpful” affect the writer’s voice?

4. How do the limits named in paragraph 3 and its final question work together to establish the writer’s voice?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 90 to 110 word explanatory paragraph proposing one small change to a place you know. Use specific word choices to establish a practical but hopeful voice, and acknowledge one limit without abandoning your proposal.

ANSWER KEY

Small Fixes, Clear Voice

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-10.W.2.e

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one phrase in each paragraph that helps the writer sound practical but hopeful. Number the phrases 1, 2, and 3 so you can use them in your answers. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, how does the phrase "a good place to start" shape the writer's voice?	**It makes the writer sound hopeful about a small improvement without claiming the shelf will solve every problem.**
2	Why does the writer contrast "buy another coat" with "hope nobody notices" in paragraph 2? What does that choice add to the voice?	**The contrast presents repair as an alternative to replacing or ignoring the problem. Its light humor makes the practical argument sound approachable.**
3	How does the sentence beginning "Good intentions are helpful" affect the writer's voice?	**It shows that the writer cares about safety and planning, not just the appeal of the idea.**
4	How do the limits named in paragraph 3 and its final question work together to establish the writer's voice?	**The limits make the writer sound honest about what the shelf cannot do. The question keeps the focus on a useful, achievable change.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At our apartment building, wet umbrellas often end up across the lobby floor. A simple umbrella stand by the door would give them a better landing place. It would not stop every puddle, and someone would still need to empty the tray after a storm. But a stand could keep the walking path clearer and spare the mail from a surprise shower. We could label it "Umbrellas only" so it does not become a home for forgotten shoes. No piece of furniture can fix a rainy day. It can, however, make coming inside a little less slippery.

Accept other supported descriptions of the passage's voice when students explain the effect of specific wording. For Part 3, look for a 90 to 110 word paragraph with a clear proposal, a consistent practical but hopeful voice, and an acknowledged limit.