Example of an Article Submission Needing Major Revisions

In the following pages you will read an article as it was submitted to the *New Teacher Advocate*, then see how it matches to the rubric reviewers use to score the articles, followed by the actual scoring. After that is the email the Managing Editor actually sent to the author. Then you will see the revised article. Please note the way that the revised article now measures up to a 4 or 5 on all items in the rubric. Although this was not a bad article, it was extremely long and wordy, so making it fit the word count and be more succinct in style made it much stronger and gave the reader definite ideas of things to do to make the first day go smoothly.
Preschool Jitters: Making the First Day Okay

*First Day Jitters* is a popular children’s book that reflects much of what I experienced, as a brand new preschool teacher, on the first day of school. In the book, as in my classroom, students walk in nervously, many crying, clinging to their parents in hopes they will not be abandoned in a room full of strangers. What the students don’t know is that for weeks, their teacher too has been working through apprehension and anxiety, trying to prepare for the “first day” situations.

Last year was my “first day,” the very beginning of my career as a preschool teacher. Decorating and setting up had been fun. Picking out a kitchen, a dress up box, and all the tiny little furniture! My mentor-teacher came by and wished me luck. As she walked out she yelled, “For the first day, wear some shin guards and have the tissues ready!” It was at that moment I realized I was not the only one new to preschool. These four-year-olds were coming to face school, the whole new experience, for the first time ever! How could I keep them from crying? How was I going to politely ask the parents to get out? It was in my hands to mold each child into a student.

Having lived through the experience last year, I now have tools ready for next year. I learned how to prepare *before* the first day. I created diversions to minimize tears. I also learned that modeling and routine lead to independence. Preparing the room is not enough. It takes preparation on a variety of levels. The day will not be perfect, but you want to aim for the “most organized chaos” [you] ever experienced (Blackwell & Pepper, 2009).

**Maximize Meet and Greet Day**

Many preschools have a day before the first day to meet your students and parents. Take a few minutes on that Meet and Greet Day to examine what type of student each child is going to be. On that day I first encountered a student who would be mine all year -- after he managed to
destroy my organized sets of manipulatives on Meet and Greet Day. It was an accident, of course, due in part to the fact that he was surveying the area by running as fast as he could around the room.

When his dad picked him up to stop him, it was like a scene from *The Exorcist*. He was kicking, squirming, and crying at the top of his lungs. His father put him down, giving in to get him to stop. If his parents couldn’t control him, what was I going to do? As it turned out, a student with teacher and parents in the room does not yield the same behavior as a student and teacher alone: I learned that later.

So, rather than waste your time on Meet and Greet Day speed-dating students, use this time to ease in to the first day. Have a questionnaire ready. Name, address, phone numbers, allergies, how will they get home, who will pick them up? Yes, the office already did this, but your getting this vital information from the parental source is a valuable opportunity you cannot miss.

Communicate clear expectations. I usually include a welcome letter with tips on what to do the first day. I provide parents with contact information, our tentative schedule, and most importantly, a copy of the school supply list. This is a polite reminder to those parents who have not bought anything. We want all the students to start together. This is not possible if some do not have the tools with them.

I also like to take pictures of the student and family to use in a calming-down station. If students cry because they miss their family, they can go to this station and look through the pictures as they hug the teddy bears, or take their mind off their distress with other calming toys. I allow the blankie or other security items for the first few days as they get acquainted.

**D Day**
For the big day itself, after collecting all the information, I make a roster on a poster with a large title, “Students in Ms. Robledos’s Class, Room 302.” I post this outside my room on the first day. Parents will poke their heads in and ask if John or Maria is in your class. Truth is, “I am not sure.” This is not a great answer to give parents. By placing the roster outside, I can politely direct them to the list. You will be too busy trying to contain the tears to check every time.

I had some parents cry along with the kids, some even alone. The thing about crying is that it’s contagious. Sometimes the students, who were fine at first, now feel compelled to cry because everyone else is crying and yelling Mommy! To avoid the already difficult task of separation, I set up a “First Day of School” background for parents to use for taking pictures just outside my door. Most parents want to cherish this moment, so they whip out their i-phones and start snapping pictures while they can still get smiles. This is the perfect distraction to swoop in, thank them, and take the student inside. By keeping the situation outside, I avoid the lingering parents who stay past the bell, as well as some crying.

Once we are all situated inside, I look over my roster and make sure I have an accurate count. You will want to count often to ensure your flock is still complete. Introduce them to their new second home. Show them where everything is, and welcome them to use items as needed. I like to do this in small groups, usually by table. Each table is labeled with an animal or something easy to recognize. I tape a big picture of the animal at both ends of the table. This helps when I want to call a group. Calling table 3 or the yellow group might not be successful, since not all may recognize numbers or colors. Establishing procedures from day one is crucial to good classroom management (Wong, 2009).

Assume Nothing

New teachers need to think back to their first day of college. Remember that feeling of having to find room 205 in Building AA-1 on a campus the size of a small town? What does that
even mean! That helpless feeling is what most of these students are feeling with all the new places they have to remember.

Lunchtime usually is a reason to rejoice since it means a break from the chaos – for most teachers. But not for preschool teachers. Many students have not been in a cafeteria setting. The concept of walking through a line, getting their own food items, and walking on a path to an assigned table is like being handed an address and expecting to get there without directions or a GPS. The children know that it is time to eat, but that’s about it for most. The skills you teach here will eventually come to them with routine. But routine is absent on the first day.

Do a walk-through of cafeteria procedures with a tray. If possible, do a pretend lunch in the cafeteria, as if it were the real thing. Show them where the milk is, where it should go on the tray. Remind them, “Two hands avoid a mess!” Tray holding is an acquired skill. After they have their tray, remind them to slowly walk to their table on an assigned path. I like to put an elephant on my lunch table for the first few weeks to help them better identify where we sit. It really seems to work better than “that table over there by the corner.” If they are looking around in panic, they are more likely to forget they have a tray in their hands and drop the meal.

Once they are seated, the next lesson begins. Teach them to open their food. Help find clues, like the arrows on the milk carton that tell us where to pull back and open. Remind them to use utensils and model how to do it. Sometimes a few students are still spoon fed, so teaching them will encourage independence.

Stay Positive

“ROAR!” That sound will probably be your stomach. Have your own emergency first day kit. Remember to keep water, a snack, and some aspirin handy. We tend to forget about ourselves in keeping track of our new friends. Starving does not promote a great attitude. Some students were hesitant to stay, some were not. Either way, a positive attitude makes the children
want to come back. Go home, let it out, and come back ready to repeat the routine. With routines, your classroom soon becomes their comfortable home away from home.

After my preschoolers and I had been together a whole month, I read aloud *First Day Jitters* at circle time. By then, both the children and I could giggle over the memory of how we had felt on our momentous first day.

Works Cited


# Rubric for *New Teacher Advocate* Review Form

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Article’s topic is current in education field</td>
<td>Topic is irrelevant to beginning educators or was a hot topic in the past but not now</td>
<td>Topic is useful but of little or no value to a novice teacher (more important things for them to consider)</td>
<td>Topic is normally well covered in education programs, so this article adds little to a new teacher’s knowledge</td>
<td>Topic is current and relevant to new teachers, is covered in most education programs, but gives application methods for classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing style is appropriate for the audience</td>
<td>Content AND style inappropriate for new teachers. Style reads like a term paper (too formal) or too simplistic. Content either too advanced or simplistic.</td>
<td>Content OR style not appropriate for new teachers. Style reads like a term paper (too formal) or too simplistic. Content either too advanced or simplistic.</td>
<td>Content and style are somewhat appropriate for new teachers. There is room for improvement in style and content.</td>
<td>Content is easy for a new teacher to implement; content is necessary for many new teachers to be successful; tone is appropriate for beginning teachers; not overwhelming or simplistic</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Article is interesting</td>
<td>You wanted to quit reading after the first paragraph; your feeling was “b-o-r-i-n-g” (yawn)</td>
<td>You trudged through the article, but found little of interest in it</td>
<td>You found the article interesting, but felt it could have been presented better</td>
<td>Your feeling was that it was a “pretty good” article</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Manuscript length fits the NTA format</td>
<td>Less than 100 words or more than 2,000 words</td>
<td>100–200 words or 1,200–2,000 words</td>
<td>200–300 words or 500–600 words or 950–1,200 words</td>
<td>Word count including references fits 450–500 for 1-page or 700–850 for 2-page</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Subject &amp; content is clear and practical</td>
<td>Ideas are complex or hard to implement in classrooms or instructions/examples are confusing; lacks sidebar and references</td>
<td>Outlines a good idea but doesn’t spell out how to implement it, or gives examples that don’t apply to most situations; lacks sidebar info and references</td>
<td>Gives instructions and examples; may add websites; includes citations and references as needed</td>
<td>Gives easy-to-understand instructions and examples; adds websites when appropriate; good use of citations and references as needed (APA)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Writing is concise</td>
<td>Written in first or third person, rambles, uses “should” or “may,” exceeds word count, all in narrative with no lists</td>
<td>Too concise to give enough information or comes across as bossy or rambling without a clear direction</td>
<td>Written in first, second, or third person; fairly clear; not too rambling; may have numbered or bulletted list (may be personal experience or uses “should” or “may”)</td>
<td>Written in mostly active voice, but changes voice, uses “should” or “may”; has a list</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Introduction and conclusion appropriate to article</td>
<td>Lacks either an introduction or conclusion; other one is lackluster</td>
<td>Introduction or conclusion is missing or is 2 or more paragraphs; one is unclear, rambling or redundant or doesn’t match content</td>
<td>Introduction does not make you want to read the rest of the article, or conclusion doesn’t summarize the article or end with a punch or inspiration to implement the ideas</td>
<td>Introduction gives brief background and reason for article and may include citations or conclusion summarizes article and ends with a punch or inspiration—but not both</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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*Note: Word count includes references.*
New Teacher Advocate Manuscript Review Form

Name of article: Pre-School Jitters: Making the First Day Okay

Name of reviewer: Sally Rushmore

Rate this manuscript from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest possible rating.

1. Article’s topic is current in education field: 1 2 3 4 5

2. Writing style is appropriate for the audience (preservice & beginning teachers): 1 2 3 4 5

3. Article is interesting; it held my attention: 1 2 3 4 5

4. Manuscript length fits NTA format (450-500 words for 1-page and 700-850 words for 2-page article): 1 2 3 4 5

5. Subject/content is clear and practical: 1 2 3 4 5

6. Writing is concise: 1 2 3 4 5

7. Introduction and conclusion are appropriate to article: 1 2 3 4 5

Recommendation for this article:

Accept X Revise/Resubmit Reject

Please add comments to explain anything you gave less than a 5. Feel free to make comments on the manuscript, but do not worry about grammar or spelling since you are reviewing the content rather than copy editing the article.

This is a great topic and I like that fact that the author has very fresh experience and wants to pass on what she has learned. It would be much more effective if she could give some quick tips with one-sentence examples. That would also help her cut her words in half. She needs to look at articles in a current NTA.
Hello, Author,

I was happy to receive your article on first day jitters for preschool. We are looking for more early childhood articles for *New Teacher Advocate*. You have some very good ideas in your article. However, I am going to ask you to do some drastic editing before I send it for review. New Teacher Advocate publishes one-page articles of 450-500 words and two-page articles of no more than 850 words, so I need you to remove about half the words in your article. I know that sounds impossible and you think that you will lose much of the content, but you will be amazed at how much you can say in 850 words. We really like articles with numbered lists or bullet points. By putting things into lists, you automatically switch to active voice which cuts words. In the passive voice you say, “On the first day you would want to open the milk carton to show them how to do it.” In the active voice, you cut all those beginning words and simply say what to do such as “Model opening the milk carton.”

The section Meet and Greet Day could have the following bullet points:

- Prepare a questionnaire.
- Communicate clear expectations.
- Take pictures of families.

Each bullet then has one longer or two shorter sentences to explain it.

I assume you are familiar with the New Teacher Advocate, but if you need to see how other authors have dealt with getting a lot of information into a small space, feel free to look at some back issues at: [http://bit.ly/NTASp12v19](http://bit.ly/NTASp12v19) - you can click on Archives in the upper left corner to see more issues.

I look forward to seeing your revised article very soon! If you have any questions, feel free to contact me by e-mail or phone.

Best wishes for a blessed day,

*Sally Rushmore*
Preschool Jitters: Tips for Making the First Day Okay

BY AUTHOR

Ms. Author is a preschool teacher working with the University of Houston’s Induction Program. Her students come from a low socioeconomic background with no prior schooling or experience with detachment from their family.

First Day Jitters (Danneberg, 2000) is a children’s book that reflects much of what I experienced as a brand new preschool teacher on the first day of school. In the book, as in my classroom, students walk in nervously, many crying, clinging to their parents in hopes they will not be abandoned in a room full of strangers. What the students don’t know is that, for weeks, their teacher too has been working through apprehension and anxiety, trying to prepare for “first day” scenarios.

Last year was my first “first day,” the very beginning of my career as a preschool teacher. My mentor teacher came by and wished me luck. As she walked away, she warned, “For the first day, wear some shin guards and have the tissues ready!” It was at that moment I realized I was not the only one new to preschool. These four-year-olds were coming to face school, a whole new experience, for the first time ever! How could I keep them from crying? How was I going to politely ask the parents to leave? It was in my hands to mold each child into a student.

Having lived through the experience last year, I now have tools ready for next year. The day will not be perfect, but I want to share how I will aim for the “most organized chaos” (Blackwell & Pepper, 2009).

Maximize Meet and Greet Day

Many schools have a Meet and Greet Day before the official first day so that parents and their preschoolers can meet the teacher. Use this opportunity to make the first day easier.

- **Prepare a questionnaire.** Find out from parents about allergies, medications, how to contact them, and who can pick up the student, and any other information you or your school will need.
• **Communicate clear expectations.** Provide a welcome packet with your contact information, your tentative schedule, and most importantly, a copy of the school supply list. The class can’t start together with only half the supplies.

• **Cut down on separation anxiety.** Take pictures of the families. I used these photos in my calming-down corner for children who were crying about missing their families.

**Prepare for D-Day**

• **Make a roster on a large poster to hang outside your room.** The roster shows parents which children are, *and are not*, in your class. It saves valuable time getting each student into the correct room.

• **Set up a “First Day of School” background just outside your door for taking pictures.** Most parents want to cherish this moment, so they pull out their iPhone® and start snapping photos while they can still get smiles. This is the perfect distraction, allowing you to swoop in, thank them, and take the student inside.

• **Make the new students welcome in their second home.** Show them where everything is. I like to do this in small groups, usually by table.

• **Establish routine from day one.** Establishing procedures from day one is crucial to good classroom management (Wong, 2009). Help yourself by setting up the classroom to be new-user friendly. For example, tape a big picture of the same animal at both ends of the table. This helps when I want to call a group. Calling *table 3* or the *yellow group* might not be successful, because not all may recognize numbers or colors.

• **Always Count.** Ever heard of runners? It’s no myth that some preschoolers slip away the first day, wanting to run home. Count often to ensure you have not lost a child.

**Assume Nothing**

• **Do a walkthrough of the cafeteria prior to lunch.** The skills you teach here eventually will become routine, but routine is absent on the first day. So place a symbol, such as a stuffed animal, on each assigned table to make it easy for students to locate their seats at lunchtime.
• **Model cafeteria procedures.** Model how to walk through the line, take food items, and find a seat. One teacher can’t manage this process for each child in a whole class. Be explicit on how to open the milk carton, silverware, and other packaging. Point out visual cues such as the arrows on cartons.

**Stay Positive**

• **Have your own emergency first-day kit.** Don’t forget about yourself. Remember to keep water, a snack, and some aspirin handy.

• **A positive attitude makes the children want to come back.** Go home, relax, and come back ready to repeat the routine. With routines, your classroom soon becomes a comfortable home away from home.

After my preschoolers and I had been together a whole month, I read aloud *First Day Jitters* at circle time. By then, both the children and I could giggle over the memory of how we had felt on our momentous first day.

**References**

