

Hello!

I've been tutoring students in writing for several years and have been considering these three as well. I have experience using IEW and CW, and have looked through samples of Classical Composition.

**IEW Pros:** This is a very easy-to-use, homeschool-friendly curriculum. What's more, it produces fast results, which builds confidence in both the students and the teacher. It gets young students writing right away and allows them to produce polished compositions by following a checklist of step-by-step instructions. Even if you don't use their method, the stylistic techniques (i.e. ideas for embellishing sentences) is worth spending a few months to learn. **Cons:** I've realized that after a year or two of using this, the curriculum gets pretty boring. Every composition starts out with a keyword outline, which is an outline based on keywords chosen from various sources. Then the student crafts sentences using those keywords. It gets a bit repetitious after the initial blast of progress. Also, IEW doesn't teach you how to craft different types of paragraphs for different purposes. It emphasizes topic sentences and supporting sentences, but not variation in types of paragraphs.

**CW Pros:** The goal of the Progymnasmata exercises is to help students develop a collection of different types of paragraphs and essays to use for different purposes. There are a total of 14 types of essays (or "exercises"), each one for a specific purpose. Each essay consists of several types of paragraphs that each support the purpose of the essay. For example, in the Maxim essay, students learn to explain the meaning of a maxim using a set of 6 or 7 types of paragraphs. Each paragraph has a specific function for supporting the explanation. This method focuses on writing at the paragraph level and not so much at a sentence level. **Cons:** While this method doesn't produce quick results and takes more consistency and a long-term commitment, I believe the end results produce a more persuasive and creative writer. After all, these were the exercises used for teaching rhetoric in ancient Greece. As for the grammar component, it is a little clumsy and disorganized, so I just skip over those lessons. They analyze English sentences using grammatical terms from Latin (Nom, Gen, Dat, etc...) which just gets confusing for students who haven't had Latin or Greek. Another difficulty with this curriculum is that the organization is harder to follow than IEW. The progymnasmata exercises are interspersed with rhetoric lessons, grammar lessons, background/historical studies, and model essay analyses. It's hard to see a clear pathway through the book. By the end of one book, students will only have produced one complete essay with all the paragraph types in it.

**CC Pros:** The subject material is the same as CW, but it is laid out much simpler and does not include miscellaneous lessons in between. This curriculum gives you much more practice. Instead of learning one paragraph at a time, it presents all the paragraph types in the first few lessons, and then gives students repeated practice in writing complete essays. I think this is a good approach for slightly older students. It gets them writing and allows them to feel more accomplished, since they write many essays and get better each time. The teacher book is excellent because it gives you sample answers for every essay the student has to write. This means a lot more examples than CW offers. **Cons:** If you are new to the Progymnasmata, it may seem a little confusing to figure out at first. The page formatting doesn't look as user-friendly as IEW or CW, so it will take more patience to sit down and read through the lesson (like

reading a popular magazine vs. reading an academic publication).

With all that said, this is how I approached these: I first used IEW to get my students confident and writing. After a year or so, when they've learned all of the stylistic techniques, I would switch over to CW or CC, depending on whether you want the grammar component or not, and on how old your students are.

Happy writing!

-Homeschool graduate, Classics major, and Grad student

Check out:

[http://www.memoriapress.com/onlineschool/mponline\\_resources/classicalcompositionresource1.htm](http://www.memoriapress.com/onlineschool/mponline_resources/classicalcompositionresource1.htm)