

WRITING ACROSS THE GRADE LEVELS

Introduction: Students should write everyday. It is one of the most complex skills that your child will learn and it takes years of consistent practice to master good writing. Here is a list of suggestions to improve writing.

- If there is a fear of writing, reward quantity of writing. Require a half page or 2 pages, or whatever seems appropriate. Even copying writing from a magazine or newspaper can help eliminate fear.
- Students should see writing as a way of communicating – just like talking. Therefore, they should always know who the audience is. Sometimes they are writing to themselves. They are reflecting about a situation, or venting, or writing notes. Sometimes the audience is a parent, friend, relative, Congressman, etc. Experiment with different audiences and always ask who the audience is.
- Don't grade everything. This may discourage young writers. If you want your child to improve in mechanics/grammar, let them select one piece of writing out of several to edit and rewrite to eliminate errors.
- One of the biggest deterrents to good writing is that the writer does not go back to read what has been written. After time has elapsed, have the student read to catch his/her own errors. Read sentence by sentence to see if they are complete. Reading out loud to him/herself is another excellent method of checking for errors.
- Keep writing samples over time to note improvements.

What to Write About:

- Use writing as a way of reviewing learning. Ask students to write out what they learned the previous day, what they expect to learn today, what they just learned (closure), or what different sources said about the same topic.
- Pick a current event to review, express an opinion, do a simulated first person account, paraphrase, rewrite the news story as a narrative story, etc.
- Write letters. These can be real letters – to family, to the newspaper, to businesses requesting things. They can be pretend letters. One character in a story writes a letter to another character. Write a letter as if you were President of the United States, the parent, your dog, an alien, etc.
- When writing book reports, do not just summarize the story. Discuss the theme (lesson) of the story. Analyze the characters. Imagine the story in a different time period. Write a different ending.
- Write an alphabet story. The first sentence begins with “A” and each successive sentence starts with the next letter of the alphabet. This forces students to vary sentence structure.
- Write a “how-to” paper. Take a process and write out instructions on how to make something or do something. Even instructions on how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich can be daunting.

- Write persuasive papers. Try to get someone to do something or believe the same way you do about a topic. Write advertisements. Write an editorial. (Read a few first.)
- Write compare and contrast papers. Take two books, characters, objects, etc. and write out similarities and differences. Find two dissimilar objects (paper and candy) and write out their similarities. Take two similar objects (i.e. 2 pairs of jeans) and write how they are dissimilar.
- For quick writes, begin a sentence and have students continue writing the rest of the sentence or the rest of the story.
 - If I were a (dog, millionaire, baby, policeman, President)
 - The most frustrating thing about...
 - Sometimes I wonder why...
- Describe things – your favorite person, your dream car, the most successful person you know, the most important invention of all times, your favorite vacation spot, your favorite television show, etc. When describing, don't use general terms (He's nice/It tastes good). Describe the thing the person does that makes him nice. Describe the taste. Using metaphors/similies will make writing even more descriptive. (He is like a big teddy bear.)
- Make an outrageous statement and see if you can support it. Example: Cars (television, school, spinach, grades) should be banned by 2020.
- Imagine a hypothetical situation. Example: How would the world be different if everyone were honest? (5 years old, tall, kind)
- Write a research paper. Pick a topic. Find resources. Reading widely on the topic. Take notes. Form a thesis. Write the paper.
- Ask your resource teacher for sample writing topics appropriate for your grade level.
- Write a response to literature that is a part of the daily reading assignments. How did the story make you feel? What would you do if you were in the same situation? What message is the author trying to send to the reader? Why do you think the main character behaved as he/she did?