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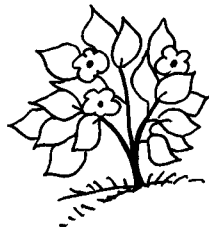
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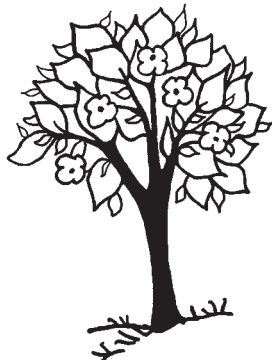
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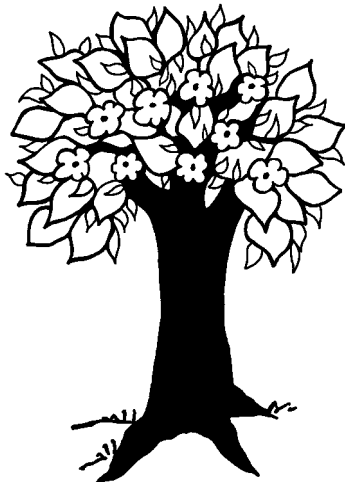
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# Letter from the Author



## Dear Readers,

Having taught for nearly 30 years, I have witnessed every phase of frustration with writing, from tears and tantrums to total disillusionment—and that reaction was from the teachers! I courted language experiences, cloze and pattern stories, creative-writing smorgasbords, whole-language themes, and writer's workshops. However, there was one "little" problem that remained unresolved . . . the students still couldn't write.

The solution dawned on me when my first child entered the teenage years: budding writers, like teenagers, need ample structure and guidelines *before* they are given too much freedom. I was motivating my young writers, challenging them, providing them with all the necessary tools, and setting them free to write *without* giving them the know-how to do so. In other words, they needed to be taught how to develop their thinking before they communicate and how to actually express their thoughts into words and sentences.

Thus began the crusade to give my "writing warriors" the "how-to" along with the "what to." Once my students understood the specific structure and format of a writing activity, they were better able to write independently, progressing beyond oral expression into sentence formation and eventually story development. Not only was the approach easy to implement and teach, my students were learning how to write well-structured and meaningful stories.

This resource book includes the writing principles and practices that have been proven successful, not only with my students, but with those of my colleagues. I hope that you and your students find the activities and guidelines just as motivating and rewarding, using them as a springboard for success in the dynamic world of writing.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jo Fitzpatrick". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "F".

Jo Fitzpatrick

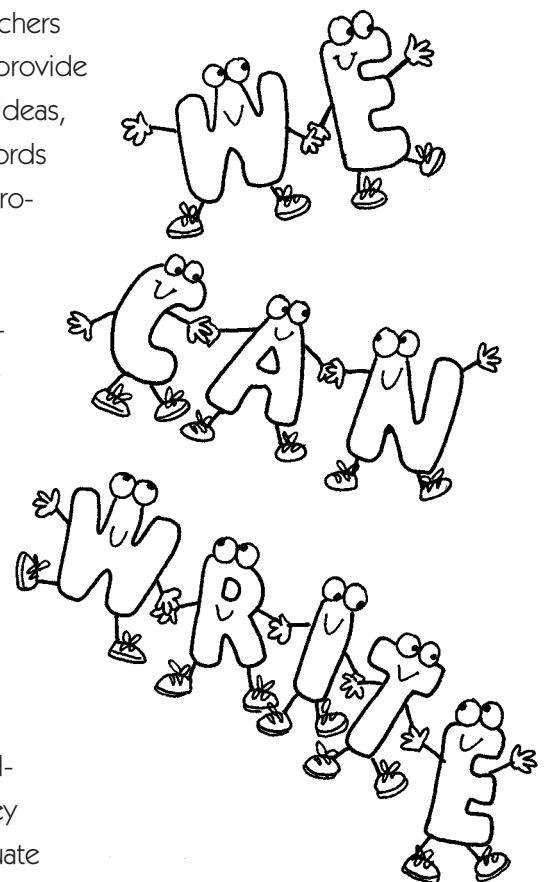
# Introduction

Children are born with the innate desire to communicate. In the early years, they label, mimic, experiment with spoken sentences, and engage in “verbal play.” As they develop and grow, there is a natural tendency for children to expand their love of language into written expression; first through random scribbles and symbols, and then with specific words and sentences.

Successful writing requires four key elements: the desire to say something, the vocabulary to say it, the structure with which to write it, and the ability to make words. Current efforts to teach writing through the use of the “writing process,” writing workshops, journal writing, and individual writing conferences may prove effective for students already exposed to structured writing, but these methods can be highly frustrating for young students still struggling with the simple task of getting their writing to make sense.

*Teaching Beginning Writing* is a complete writing resource that offers stimulating activities and numerous reproducibles to help teachers capitalize on children’s natural love of language. The lessons provide clear, structured guidelines to help young writers clarify their ideas, maintain focus, and connect their thoughts to form related words and sentences. The writing program described in this book progresses through five sequential writing stages that specifically address the needs of beginning writers. The activities are generic and flexible in nature to accommodate different ability levels, to allow for homogeneous or heterogeneous grouping, and to fit easily into current classroom curriculum. Each skill is introduced at the oral level so students can readily formulate their ideas before trying to write them on paper. Graphic organizers, picture prompts, and sentence starters are also provided to help students express their thoughts verbally and in writing.

The overall goal of this writing program is to assist students in becoming thoughtful, self-improving writers. Once young children know how to write a good, “element-rich” sentence, they can easily expand those elements into a story. Through adequate exposure, engagement, and experience, students will be able to organize what they want to say, discover the vocabulary with which to say it, use structure in writing it, and strengthen their ability to make words. In other words, they will learn the “how-to” of writing.



# Developmental Stages of Beginning Writing

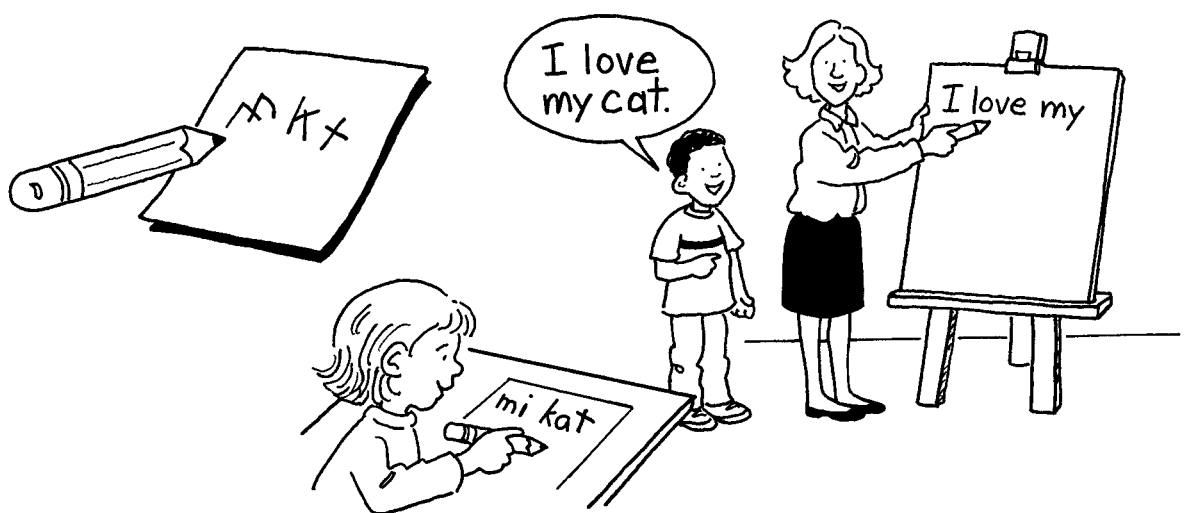
Learning to write is a monumental task for both the student and the teacher. It involves more than simply “putting talk down on paper.” It is an ongoing process that is dependent on a child’s maturation, exposure, and experience. To best support and encourage beginning writers, teachers should be aware of the developmental stages of writing, adjust instruction to meet the needs and abilities of individual students, and incorporate other aspects of language development into the writing process.

Beginning writers progress through a continuum of skills and abilities, acquiring “building blocks” to help them advance and excel to the next level of learning. This resource book groups these skills and abilities into five different developmental stages. Use the following writing sequence to identify and assess the writing capabilities of your students. Keep in mind that students may not consistently move forward in their progress or finish one stage before moving on to the next.



## Stage 1: Pre-Emergent Writer

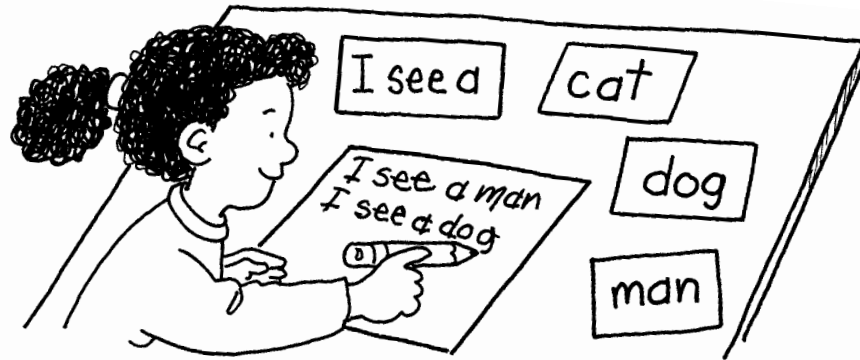
- Has little or no understanding of the alphabetic principle—using specific letters to represent sounds. “Writing” consists of scribbles, random symbols, and strings of unrelated letters.
- Has an overall understanding of story content and structure.
- Dictates sentences and stories, including rewrites of literature, sentences for pictures, and stories based on personal experiences.
- Begins to develop *phonemic awareness*—the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate sounds in spoken language. Can write some letters, but still reverses them on occasion.
- Progresses into letter/sound correspondence and word writing. Gets a better sense of beginning and ending letters as well as spacing between words. Uses invented spelling, and can write some “sight words” (e.g., *the, me, like*) from visual memory.





## Stage 2: Emergent Writer

- Forms new words by recombining *phonemes* or sound units (for example, *bat* to *cat*). On occasion, may reverse letter order within words.
- Identifies sentence components and word functions. Writes words or phrases to complete *patterned sentences*—sentences that have the same beginning or ending (for example, *I see a man* and *I see a cat*).
- Begins to write simple, unrelated sentences that include some punctuation. Uses literature as a model to compose nonpatterned sentences that express ideas and opinions.



## Stage 3: Early Writer

- Expands sentences to express more complete thoughts.
- Combines and organizes simple, related sentences to form a short paragraph.
- Uses consistent invented-spelling patterns.
- Begins to write three-part stories that include a character, a setting, and an action (e.g., stories that describe “who,” “doing what,” and “where”). The stories are usually descriptive or narrative.

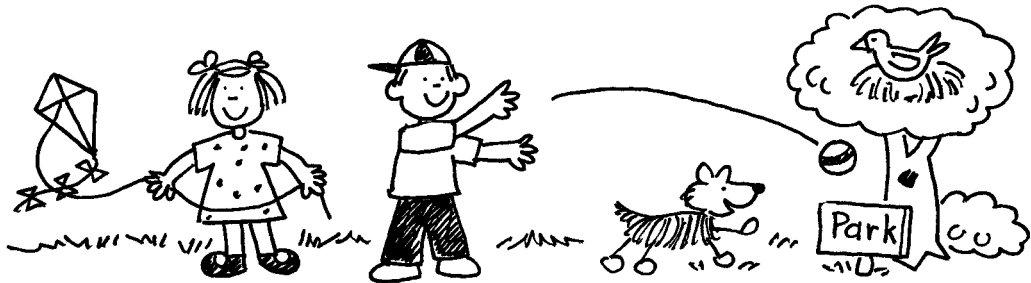


I go to the park with my friend.  
We play. I like the park.



### Stage 4: Developing Writer

- Expands three-part stories into five-part stories that include a character, a setting, an action, a time sequence, and a personal response (e.g., stories that describe “who,” “doing what,” “where,” “when,” and “why”).
- Uses standard spelling with greater frequency, especially words with silent letters, *r*-controlled vowels, and homonyms.
- Punctuates sentences on occasion, but not consistently.
- Describes story parts with greater detail.
- Begins to experiment with different writing styles, including informational writing, descriptive stories, and simple narratives.

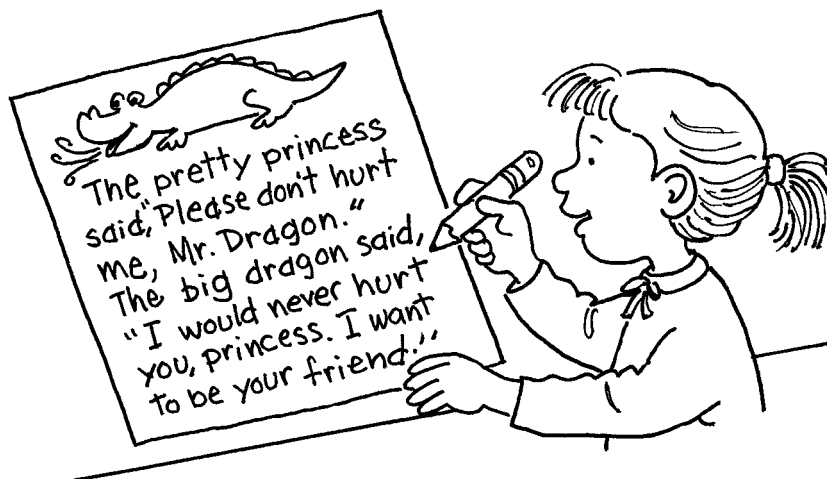


I like to play in the park with my friend.  
We play games and fly kites. We throw a ball  
to my dog Shaggy. We have lots of fun.



### Stage 5: Established Writer

- Composes stories that have a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Includes a distinctive “voice” when writing stories. Has a good sense of “audience.”
- Uses compound and/or complex sentences.
- Develops more structured paragraphs that include an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.
- Self-edits for complete sentences, use of capitalization, and ending punctuation.
- Correctly spells many basic words.
- Includes more advanced story-writing elements, including use of persuasion, conflict resolution, and dialogue.



# Teaching Beginning Writers

Although young children have a natural tendency to communicate, and may pick up aspects of writing through the reading process, they still need to be taught how to structure their ideas and expand their thinking into related sentences and stories. Ideally, children should be given the opportunity to learn and practice writing skills on a daily basis. Lessons should incorporate a variety of learning styles to best meet the needs of individual students. Teachers should be aware that beginning writers not only progress through five different stages of writing, but through four different performance levels within each stage.

- **Oral Level:** Students demonstrate their understanding of concepts through discussion, dictation, and verbal examples. However, they are not yet ready to express their ideas in writing.
- **Representational Level:** Initially students use drawings and diagrams to organize and describe their thoughts and ideas. As new elements and skills are introduced through teacher modeling and group collaboration, students are able to see how concepts work. They learn how to apply skills by interacting with the teacher as he or she demonstrates and guides the writing process.
- **Independent Level:** Students independently (or with partners) practice and apply a skill learned during direct instruction. They write words, sentences, and eventually stories to accompany their illustrations. Their writing demonstrates a basic understanding of the activity's concepts, and they are learning to apply these concepts and integrate them with previously learned skills.
- **Advanced Level:** Students independently (or with partners) practice and expand on writing concepts. They demonstrate more mature thought processing, and their ideas show a greater degree of sophistication. They not only draw pictures and write words to express their thoughts, they use a combination of skills to elaborate on the concepts taught during direct instruction.





# Teaching Tips



The activities presented in this resource book are multilevel—they include instructional guidelines, alternative teaching approaches, and extension activities to help you best meet the needs of a multiability classroom. When teaching the activities, have all students participate in both the oral and representational phases of each lesson. Guide students through the composing process and reinforce proper use of sentence structure and mechanics. This will ensure that all students understand the basic writing concepts presented and will encourage students to share ideas. After direct instruction, continue to help less capable writers as they complete the activity. Use the follow-up suggestions to adapt guided practice and independent work to best meet the needs of upper-level students. In addition, post around the classroom enlarged, colored, and laminated writing charts (see *Reproducibles and Resources*, pages 69–112) for easy reference and visual guidance. Also consider the following suggestions as you teach writing to your students.



**Stage 1:** Focus on the “overall picture” of written communication and story development. Discuss story content, purpose, and structure. Have students identify and describe story components such as characters, setting, plot, and story sequence. Remember that even at this early stage, children benefit from discussing story development, even if they are unable to put their thoughts into writing.



**Stage 2:** Focus on having students express and organize thoughts through the use of words and sentences. Identify and discuss sentence components, including word functions (e.g., “naming” words and “doing” words) and the arrangement of words within sentences. Have students manipulate parts of a sentence and practice sentence formation.



**Stage 3:** Focus on having students expand ideas to form more complete sentences. Emphasize word functions and how they are used to enhance sentences. Have students form three-part sentences and stories that describe “who,” “what,” and “where.”



**Stage 4:** Focus on story development and sequence of events. Emphasize combining and “stretching” sentences to write more complete, detailed stories. Help students work on story transition from one event to the next. Have students compose five-part sentences and stories that describe “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “why.”



**Stage 5:** Focus on having students explore various writing styles and use more sophisticated story elements, such as dialogue, cause-and-effect, and persuasive arguments. Help students develop a distinct “writing voice” and a sense of “audience.” Encourage them to self-edit their work, correcting for punctuation, structure, and content.

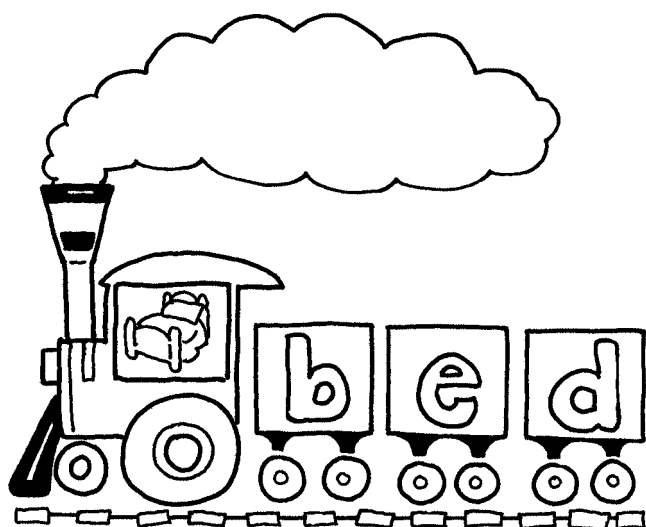
# Writing and Spelling

When students are learning to express themselves, the emphasis should be more on ideas than on mechanics. Children who are permitted and encouraged to “spell it so you can read it” typically write longer, more creative sentences and stories than children who only write words they know how to spell. However, caution must be taken; when “invented spelling” is used over long periods of time, misspellings become a learned pattern. To avoid this problem, spelling lessons should accompany writing instruction. Like writing, spelling is a sequential process that includes different developmental stages: precommunicative spelling, semiphonetic spelling, phonetic spelling, transitional spelling, and, finally, conventional spelling.

## Precommunicative and Semiphonetic Spellers

Children attempt to write words long before they understand the principles of spelling. Precommunicative spellers use random scribbles and symbols to communicate their thoughts on paper. They have not yet developed the conceptual understanding that letters of the alphabet represent spoken sounds. As these students mature and are allowed the opportunity to “play with sounds,” they enter the next stage of development: semiphonetic spelling. At this phase, children realize that letters represent spoken sounds, which can be blended to form words. However, they have difficulty hearing and recognizing individual sounds within words. Thus, their word spellings are often incomplete. For example, semiphonetic spellers may write the word *where* as *wr*.

Precommunicative and semiphonetic spellers need plenty of exposure to and practice with phonemic-awareness activities in order to progress into the more advanced stages of spelling. They need to be trained to listen for the individual sounds that make up words. When teaching precommunicative and semiphonetic spellers, focus on writing activities that help students segment or split apart words into separate sound units.

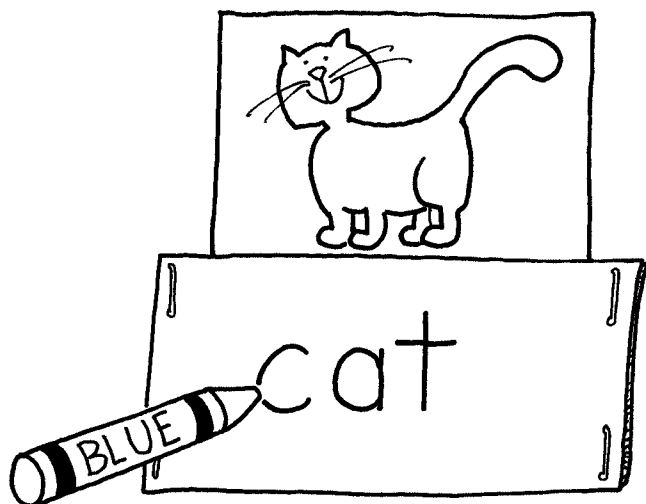


### **Sample Activity: Picture Trains**

Use “picture trains” to emphasize how to segment sounds. In the first part of the train (the engine), draw or glue on a picture of an object whose name includes a short vowel sound (consonant-vowel-consonant patterns work best). Then attach a blank boxcar for each sound in the word. Have children look at the picture and count the number of boxcars to identify how many sounds are in the word. Then have them write the corresponding letters that make up the sounds.

## Phonetic Spellers

Phonetic spellers sound out words in order to spell them. They do not rely on visual cues. Because various letter combinations represent the same sound, phonetic spellers are frequently inaccurate. For example, they may spell *where* as *whar*. To help these students become better spellers, teach activities that help them compare the way words sound to how they look in print.



### Sample Activity: Picture Pockets

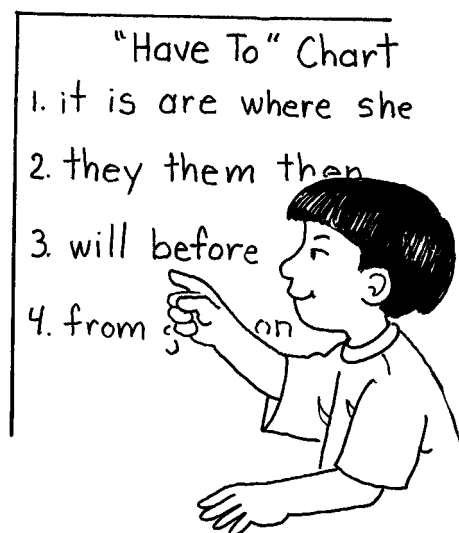
Cut out unlabeled picture cards of objects whose names include a short vowel sound. Use a permanent marker to write the name of each object at the bottom of its picture. Fold up and staple the bottom of a laminated index card to form a pocket. Stack the picture cards inside the pocket so that the names are covered. Invite students to use erasable crayons or dry-erase markers to write on the pocket front the name of the picture that is on top of the stack. Have them lift the card out of the pocket to self-check their spelling.

## Transitional Spellers

In addition to “sounding out words,” transitional spellers rely on visual cues to remember how words look. These students are developing a “memory bank” of high-frequency words for quick and easy recall. The spelling errors these students make typically involve the incorrect use of letter patterns. For example, transitional spellers may write *whair* for the word *where*. To help these students become more accurate spellers, allow plenty of opportunities for them to identify, memorize, and practice writing “sight words”—words used often in writing, or words that follow irregular spelling patterns.

### Sample Activity: “Have To” Word Bank

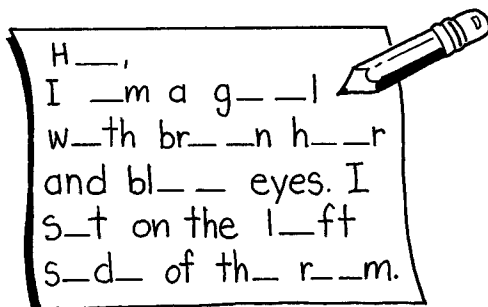
Make a chart of “have to” words (i.e., high-frequency words) for students to refer to as they read and write. List the words in numbered rows of ten. You may choose to add corresponding rebus symbols so emergent writers can easily identify the words. When students ask how to spell these words, send them to the chart to check the spelling themselves. If a child needs more guidance in finding a word on the chart, identify which numbered row the word is in.



(Note: This chart doesn't have to list words in ABC order because teachers may not present them that way. He/she may just tag on the words to the chart as they are learned.)

## Conventional Spellers

Conventional spelling is synonymous with accurate spelling. Children at this developmental stage successfully use both auditory and visual cues to remember how to spell words. They are expanding their knowledge and understanding of letter patterns and “word families” to become better spellers. To help these students consistently spell words accurately, teach activities that focus on word parts (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, and parts of compound words), and help students learn different spellings for same sounds (e.g., *ate* and *eight*). Encourage the use of new vocabulary, and help students compare the spelling patterns of new words to those already learned. Finally, stress purposeful writing, as it is one of the most important keys to learning how to spell.



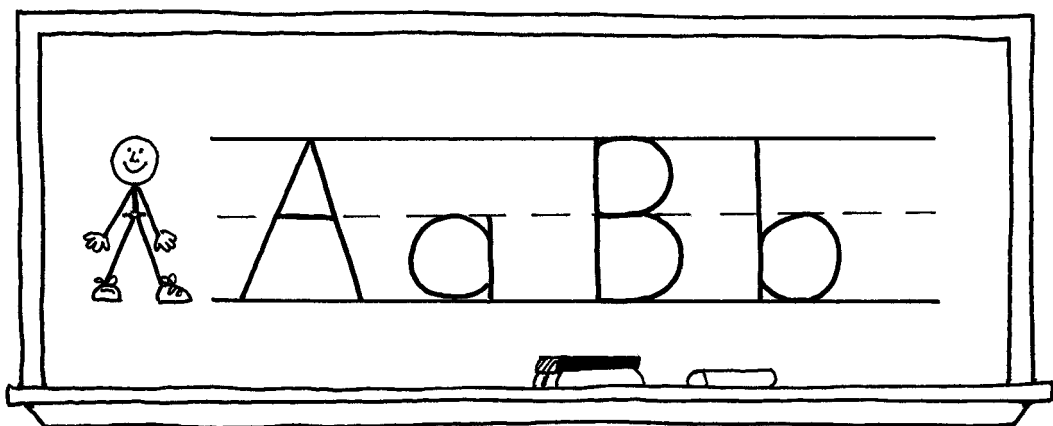
### **Sample Activity: Secret Messages**

Write and photocopy simple sentences or a short story about a theme-related topic or classroom event. Then delete word parts, and draw a writing line for each omitted letter. Invite students to fill in the blanks to discover the “secret message.”

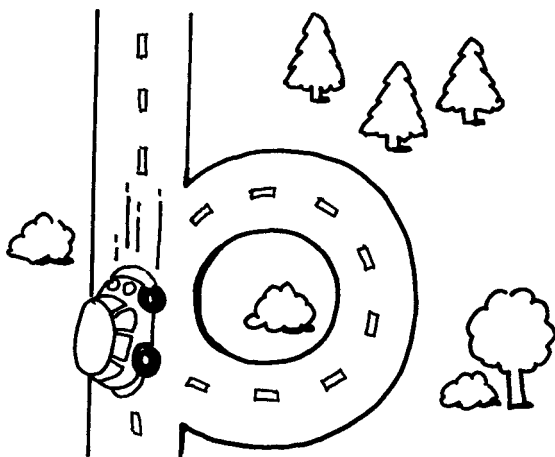
## Handling Handwriting

To avoid putting young children on “overload” by expecting good handwriting in addition to thoughtful, sequential stories, initiate handwriting instruction before teaching writing. By the time students are ready to begin writing sentences and stories, their handwriting skills will already be established.

At the beginning of the school year, have students concentrate on letter size, letter formation, directionality, and spacing. Use a comical stick figure (“Charlie the Line Man”) to introduce the three boundary lines used to guide letter formation—the head line (touching the top of Charlie’s head), the middle line (corresponding to Charlie’s belt), and the foot line (the line Charlie is standing on).



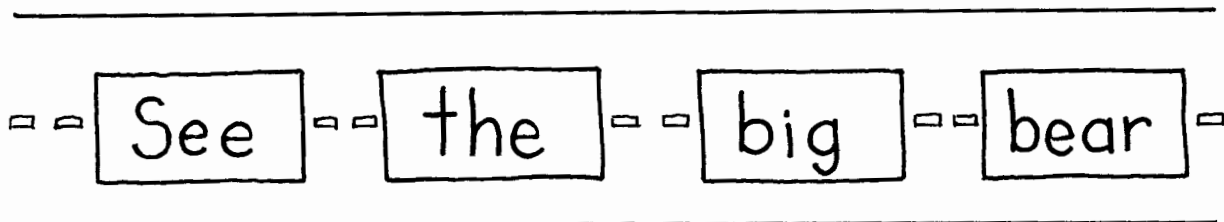
Teach “rounded letters” first (e.g., a, c, e, o, and s), followed by “uh oh” backtrack letters (e.g., b, d, g, h, m, n, p, q, and r), “stick letters” (e.g., f, i, k, l, and t), “tail letters” (e.g., j and y), and finally “zig-zag” letters (e.g., v, w, x, and z). When introducing the first “uh oh” letter, share the following story to encourage the use of continuous strokes and to reduce letter-reversal problems:



### **“Uh-Oh” Story**

*One day your mom takes you on a drive to the ice-cream store. On the way there, she misses the street and says, “Uh oh! I missed my turn.” Does she get out of the car, pick it up, and go back to the turn? No, she just backs up. So, when you’re writing the “uh oh” letters that have a turn, don’t stop and pick up your “car” (pencil); just back up with your pencil and make the turn.*

Teach only one or two letters at a time, and allow plenty of opportunities for whole-group and independent practice. During direct instruction, have students draw a green dot to designate the starting point of a letter; this will help prevent oversized print and letter reversals. Have them write rows of the same letter and then circle the one they think looks best. Once students have had adequate practice making individual letters, help them write words and then sentences. For students having difficulty spacing out words, draw boxes on the lines for them to write the words in.

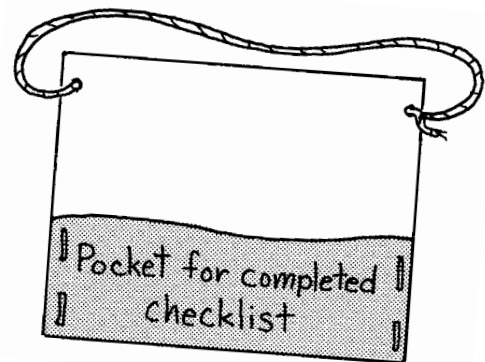
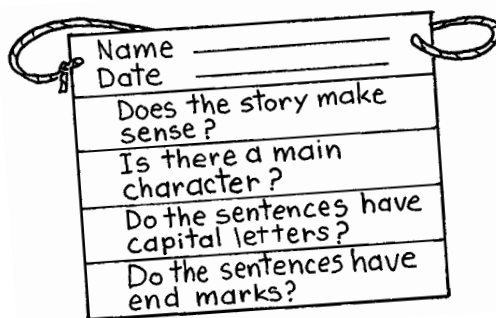


## **Helping ESL Students**

ESL students will benefit from the oral component of the activities in this resource book. They will learn how to verbally expand sentences and stories by describing “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “why.” Because the activities emphasize sentence formation, students who are learning the English language will develop a better understanding of syntax, word order, and what is needed to make a complete sentence. They will also learn word functions as well as proper use of “connector words” (i.e., prepositions, articles, and conjunctions). One of the best benefits for ESL learners is being able to participate in the same activities as the rest of the class, which will help the students receive support and encouragement from their peers.

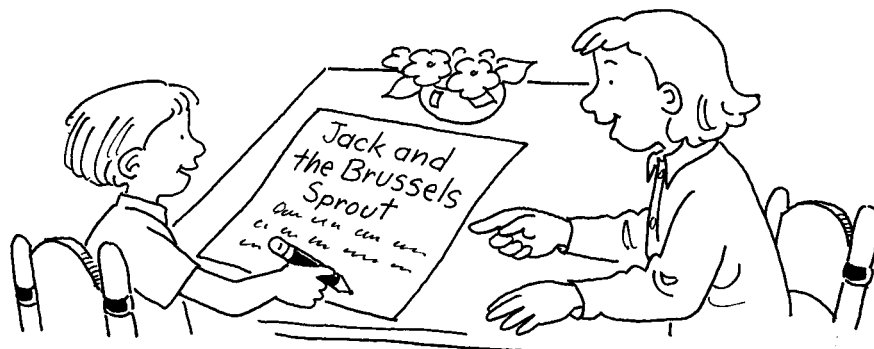
# Record-Keeping and Assessment

Use the Performance Checkoff sheets (pages 69 and 70) to assess and evaluate students' progress as they advance through the different levels and stages of writing. Use these assessment charts during student-teacher or parent-teacher conferences to discuss the student's accomplishments and current writing needs. In addition to the assessments that you've written, have students use simplified checklist sheets to self-assess and partner-edit stories. Include questions such as *Does the story make sense? Is there a main character? Do the sentences have capital letters? Do the sentences have end marks?* For extra fun, staple stacks of checklist sheets to cardboard backings to make "checklist necklaces" for students to wear as they circulate and share their stories with partners. (See the illustration below.) Have pairs listen to and look at each other's stories. Then ask each "listening partner" to use the top sheet of his or her necklace to check off information about his or her partner's story. Instruct the "reading partner" to take the completed sheet and store it inside a pocket stapled to the back of his or her checklist necklace. Review the completed sheet with the student during an individual conference.



# Parent Involvement

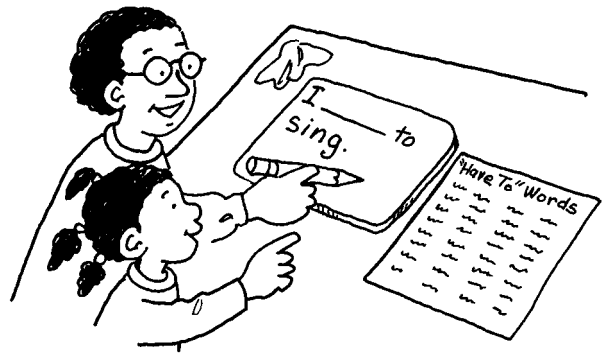
Parents play an important role in the development of writing skills in young children. Family discussions, storytelling, and shared reading experiences are ideal segues to language exploration and story development. Encourage parent involvement by sending home letters (see pages 16–18) that describe the writing process and offer activities for children and their parents to complete together.



## Dear Parents,

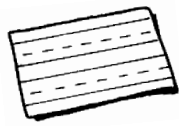
Attached is a list of “have to” words that your child is learning in class. These high-frequency words are ones children tend to use over and over again as they write. There is no easy way for children to remember these “sight words”; the best way is by repetitively seeing them in print. You can help your child learn these words by spending time together reading and writing. Here are just a few ways to turn learning time into fun time:

- Write eight to ten “have to” words on an erasable memo board that is hung on your refrigerator. Every time your child sees or hears one of the sight words during shared reading or storytelling, ask him or her to spell the word aloud. If the word is spelled correctly, erase it from the list. Reward your child when all the words have been erased from the board. Repeat the process with other “have to” words.
- Write on paper (or on an erasable memo board) some simple, silly sentences. Erase all the high-frequency words. Invite your child to select words from the “have to” list to fill in the blanks. Compare and discuss the “sense” and “nonsense” sentences that your child formed.



- Use the “Have To” Words sheet to play “Four in a Row” with your child. Copy each word onto a separate index card, and then place the stack of cards facedown on a table. Take turns selecting cards from the pile and matching them to words on the sheet. Have one player mark the words he or she selects by drawing a circle around the matching word on the list; have the other player draw a square to mark his or her words. The first person to mark four words that are in a row wins the game.
- Use “have to” words to play a game of “Concentration.” Make two matching sets of high-frequency word cards. Place the cards facedown on a table. Take turns flipping over pairs of cards to find matches. When a player uncovers a match, he or she must say a sentence that includes the word.





# "Have To" Words



about	going	made	then
after	good	make	there
and	had	my	they
are	has	name	this
as	have	next	we
at	he	not	went
before	her	of	what
but	here	on	when
can	him	play	where
come	in	said	who
could	is	see	why
do	it	she	will
for	know	that	with
from	like	the	would
go	look	them	you



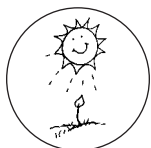
## Dear Parents,

Your child is learning to write descriptive sentences that describe “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “why.” Soon he or she will be learning how to expand sentences into vivid and intriguing stories that have a beginning, a middle, and an end. You can help your child’s writing progress by discussing key parts of a story, identifying new vocabulary words, and helping him or her discover meaningful topics to write about. The following activities are just a few ways to help your child develop a love of writing:

- Have your child observe and read printed materials in your environment, such as food labels, road signs, newspaper advertisements, and amusement-park signs. Look for ways in which your child can write about people and objects in and around your home. For example, have your child write a new commercial about a favorite food, replace the dialogue in a comic strip, write invitations to a family function, or use cutout words from junk-mail advertisements to form sentences.
- Read aloud and discuss stories to help your child understand general story structure. Ask your child questions about key elements of the story—who the character is, what he or she looks like, where and when the story takes place, what events happened, and why the events happened. Encourage your child to visualize the images being described and to identify specific words and sentences that help the story “come alive.” Invite your child to retell the story and summarize the beginning, middle, and end.
- Work together to complete a “topics chart” that your child can use to preplan stories to be written at home or in class. Include the following categories: *Friends*, *Family*, *Favorite Activities*, *Special Places*, *Special Holidays*, *Special Traditions*, *Hobbies* or *Sports*, and *Pets*. Help your child think of topics to list underneath the different headers. On a regular basis, invite your child to select a topic from the list to write about. Make a copy of the topics chart for your child to bring to school so that he or she has several ideas to choose from when asked to write a story.
- Invite your child to secretly write descriptive sentences about favorite people, places, or things. Then have him or her read the sentences aloud as you draw a picture to match the words. Show the picture to your child, and ask if the drawing is what he or she had in mind. Help your child revise the sentences to be more descriptive and to better match his or her thoughts. Switch roles and repeat the process.



# Story Log



Make photocopies and a transparency of the Story Log sheet. Introduce a story by describing the main characters and the setting. Invite students to close their eyes and visualize what is being described. Place the Story Log transparency on an overhead projector, and draw in the appropriate boxes simple pictures of the characters and the setting.





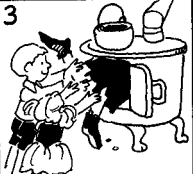
Explain that the three remaining boxes will be filled in after the story is read. Ask students to listen carefully as you read the story aloud, having them pay close attention to the sequence of events—what happens at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the story. As you read the story aloud, stop and discuss key events to help students keep track of the story sequence. After reading the story, give each student a copy of the Story Log sheet. Have students refer to your illustrations as they draw pictures of the characters and the setting. Use the transparency to guide students as they draw pictures of what happened at the beginning (box 1), in the middle (box 2), and at the end (box 3) of the story. (Note: Tell students to draw simple illustrations—e.g., stick figures and simple shapes—so that the focus of the lesson is on the story content.) Invite volunteers to retell the story using their pictures as a reference.

## Materials

- primary story that has a clear beginning, middle, and end
- Story Log sheet (page 71)
- overhead projector, transparency, and markers
- crayons or markers

## Objectives

- Listen for and identify key events in a story read aloud.
- Identify which story events occur at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end.
- Identify the story setting and key characters.
- Draw pictures to represent the key events in a story.

Story Log		
Name _____		
Date _____		
Characters  Hansel and Gretel	Setting  the woods	
1 	2 	3 

**Extension:** Repeat the process with other stories. Depending on their ability level, have students discuss the stories and complete story logs collaboratively, dictate sentences to go along with their pictures, or independently write their own corresponding words and sentences.

# Do It Yourself



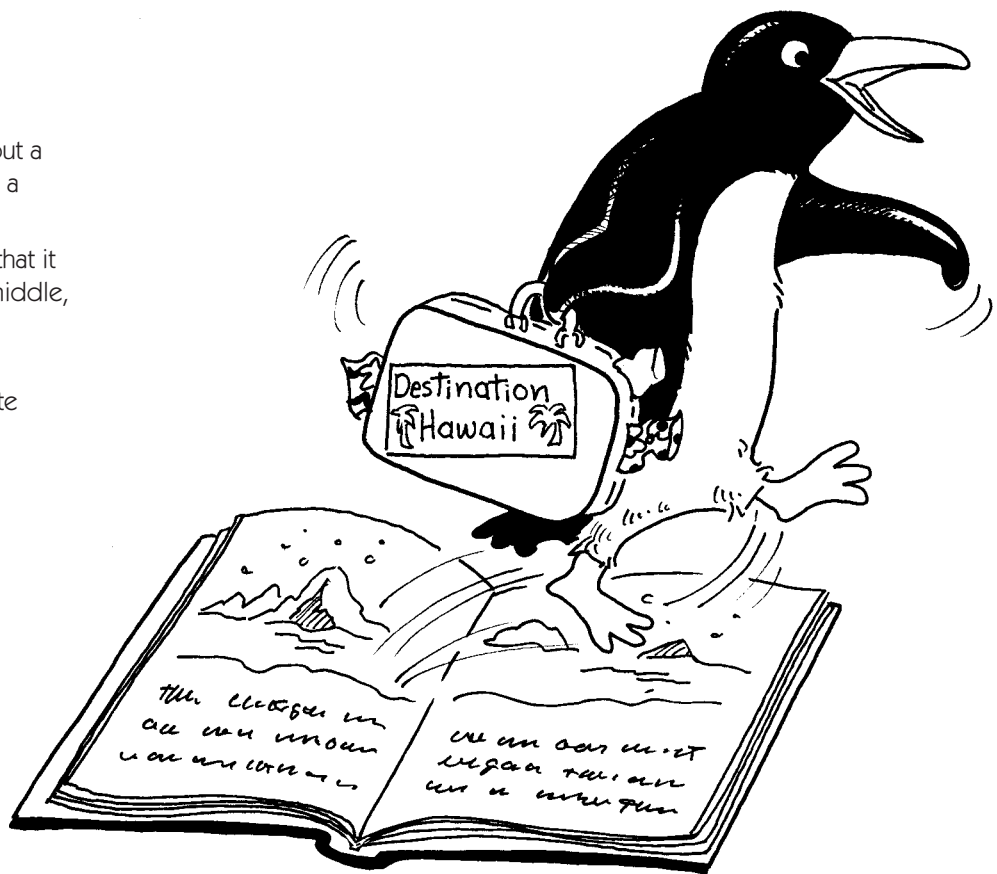
In advance, draw pictures of a character and a setting on a Story Log sheet. Make photocopies of the sheet, and distribute them to individual students, partners, or small groups. Ask each student (or team of students) to make up a story that includes the given character and setting. Remind students that their stories must include three parts—a beginning, a middle, and an end. Have them draw pictures on the log sheet of what happens first, next, and last. Invite students to share their stories. Compare and contrast the variations in story theme and sequence.

## Materials

- Story Log sheet (page 71)
- crayons or markers

## Objectives

- Make up a story about a specific character in a particular setting.
- Structure a story so that it has a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Work with others to develop and illustrate a story.



**Variation:** Use an overhead transparency to develop a collaborative story with students. Invite each student to draw his or her own illustrations for the group story.

**Extension:** In addition to providing the character and the setting, describe how the story begins (or invite a volunteer to decide the first event). Then ask students to determine how the rest of the story evolves. This approach will help demonstrate the divergence of story development.