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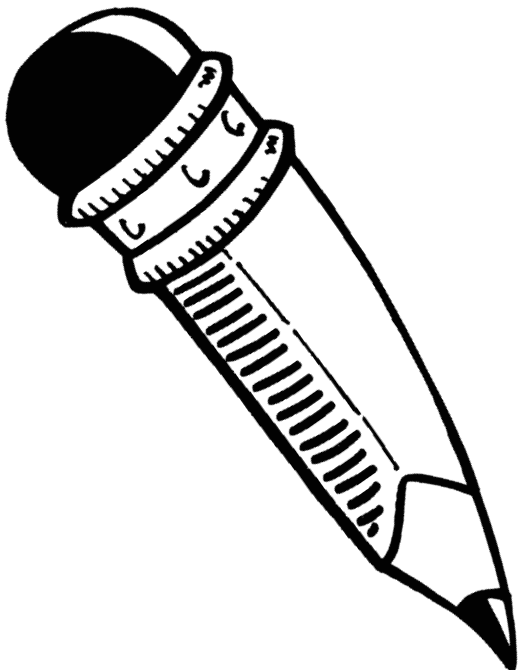
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# Introduction

Teachers approach the instruction of writing with the purpose of helping children in three areas: fluency, form, and mechanics. The focus of this book is fluency. The prompts are organized around essential aspects of the four writing domains, including skill concepts and writing products (e.g., persuasive essay, campaign speech, friendly letter). Critical components of form are included on each page. This book can be used independently or in conjunction with a regular writing program. The prompts provide students with many choices for Continuous Daily Writing (CDW).

## Continuous Daily Writing

Just as children become better readers by reading, so children become better authors by writing. Fifteen to twenty minutes of daily, non-stop writing provides frequency of practice. Each CDW entry is a rush of spontaneous ideas—much like a brainstorm, but in narrative text. The writing is continuous and connected. Students' pencils should never stop moving. Students do not stop to correct mechanics, cross out, or rewrite. Stopping for mechanical corrections and revisions may inhibit the free flow of thought.



## Organization of Domains and Writing Prompts

There are 52 weeks of writing ideas to choose from, organized into 13-week segments by the four writing domains: expressive, narrative, informative, and persuasive. Each week has six writing prompts with a particular focus (e.g., short story, advertisements), a wild-card prompt (not related to the focus), and one free-choice selection. The order of topics does not matter; however, if you have been emphasizing a particular writing product (e.g., persuasive essays), you may wish to use the prompts listed under that product.

Each domain begins with a one-page introduction that highlights student background knowledge, career application, and making the most of the writing process. This page also includes teacher tips. Domains can be covered in any order, but starting with the expressive domain will lay a strong foundation in literary devices that will benefit student writing in all domains.

## Topic Choice

Do not assign topics to students. Instead, give students a page of topics from which to choose. Invite them to select topics in any order or write on one topic for a few days or even the entire week. If a student is not interested in any of the topics listed, encourage him or her to create another topic of interest (free choice) or respond to recent literature he or she has read. The most important aspects of CDW are that students have access to an interesting topic and that the teacher provides time for students to develop continuous, fluent writing in an uninterrupted atmosphere.

Many students discover that one writing prompt leads to a rather lengthy piece, and they may wish to continue their writing beyond the 15-minute CDW or into the next day's CDW time. Give students the freedom to continue writing on topics of interest during a writing period, at home, or during free time. Encourage continuous exploration of ideas

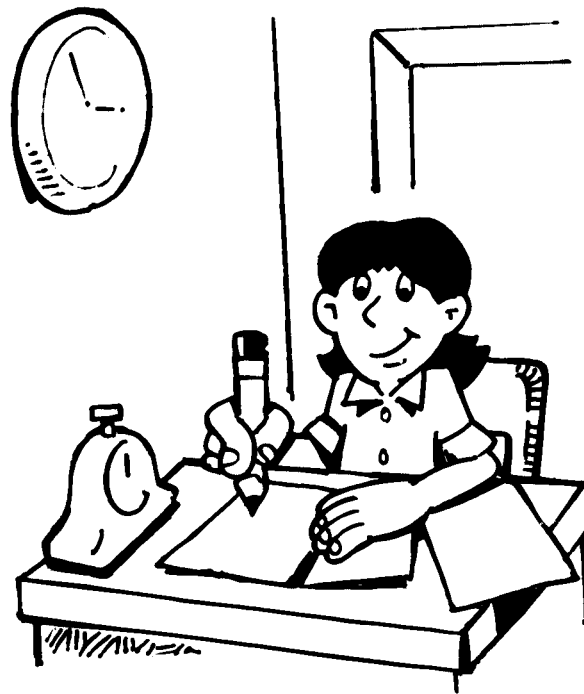
even when some drafts may never be completed. C. S. Lewis said that some of his best books were based upon notes and manuscripts written several years previously and then revisited.

Students who write on topics that interest them will be much more inclined to develop enthusiasm, motivation, and positive attitudes towards writing. So, if one student keeps choosing science topics, encourage him or her to do this—in all likelihood, these strong preferences predict later career goals. Help set the stage for the enjoyment of writing.

### Materials and Daily Procedure

Each week provide students with one sheet of ideas that coordinate with your writing program. Have them write their name and the date of the first day of that week at the top of the page. Have students initial or cross off the box next to each prompt to which they respond. At the end of the week, ask students to staple the sheet to the papers they generated, and have them store these papers in a CDW folder. Encourage students to revisit these papers if they would like to further develop any of the topics at a later time.

Have students choose their topic prior to a recess or lunch break and then participate in CDW right after the break. The break time provides a gestation period prior to the writing session. Have students place a topic sheet, a notebook, and two or three sharpened pencils on their desk when they leave for break (so they do not need to get out of their seat to retrieve writing utensils during CDW). When students reenter the classroom, have them immediately go to their desk to write. Similar to Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), have students stay on task during CDW and focus on their writing. If you cannot provide students with this break, consider lengthening the CDW time by an additional five minutes. Set a timer, and encourage students to use the five minutes before the timer rings to think about their topic. When the bell rings, have students begin writing.



### A Balanced Writing Program

A balanced writing program incorporates time for teaching fluency, form, and mechanics. Continuous Daily Writing provides an opportunity for students to develop and experience writing *fluency*. Introduce *form* during direct instruction on the structure and framework of each writing topic. Students will strengthen or reinforce form as they make knowledgeable revisions of their writing based on the required format of their writing product and an understanding of the key characteristics of good writing in a particular genre. For example, a friendly letter requires the date, greeting, body, and closing, while an essay requires an interesting lead, details, and a strong ending. *Mechanics* refers to grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Students refine mechanics during the editing process. Time spent in all three areas helps authors develop their skills to their fullest potential.

It may be that students will begin writing products during CDW that they will want to revise later for larger writing projects. Great! However, during the confines of CDW, students should

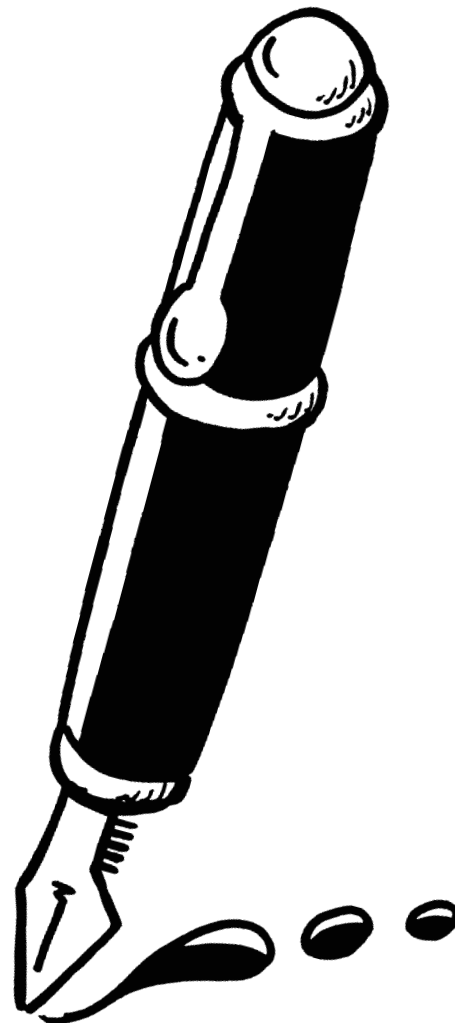
still be expected to “push the envelope” in their writing fluency. Revising, editing, and publishing should be reserved for later. CDW time is exclusively for continuous flow of thought on paper. CDW promotes the brainstorming and rough draft stages of the writing process. Revision, editing, and publishing can be saved for your writing program.

There are a million ways to elicit interest in the subject of writing. Let your creative juices flow . . . and also those of your students. Invite them to enjoy, explore, and freely write as they develop a high degree of fluency. Over time you will guide the development of form and mechanics within the context of your writing program. However, for some part of the school day, every student needs to experience the pleasure of simply writing.

### **Assessment and Lesson Planning**

Once a week collect samples of student writing and assess how the class as a whole is meeting the critical components of each week’s writing concept or product. Lead a class discussion the following day to share your discoveries. Do not refer to specific student papers because the papers are not meant to be assessment tools for the growth of any one student. Instead, discuss patterns you identified in the samples to encourage students to consider and develop their use of the critical components for that week’s writing. In addition, use the samples to help guide your understanding of the skills of the class as a whole. For example, it may become clear that the class needs to develop its understanding of organization, focus, or a particular element of grammar or punctuation. Use this information to help you plan your lessons within the context of your writing program. Do not, however, use the papers generated from CDW as examples. You do not want to encourage students to focus on editing during the fluency practice of CDW. Return samples to students by the end of the week to be filed with that week’s papers.

Invite students to assess their own interest and performance in writing with the Self-Survey I reproducible (page 7). Distribute the Self-Survey I reproducible at the beginning of the school year, and invite students to answer the questions honestly. Collect the surveys, and use them as a springboard to discussion or to guide curriculum choices without referring to individual comments or surveys. At the beginning of the next semester, distribute the Self-Survey II reproducible (page 8), invite students to reflect on their growth thus far, and encourage them to answer the questions honestly again. Then, distribute the first self-survey, and encourage students to compare their answers. Finally, help students set goals for the upcoming semester.



Author \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Self-Survey I

**Directions:** Answer questions 1–6. Use this scale to answer questions 1, 2, and 3:

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Not at all                      Somewhat                      Extremely

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you enjoy writing? \_\_\_\_\_
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, how well do you feel you write? \_\_\_\_\_
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important do you think it is to write well? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you write for your own pleasure outside of class? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What kinds of writing do you enjoy the most (e.g., letter, story, report)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. If you had free time to write about topics of your choice each day, how many minutes would you like to write on self-selected topics (e.g., ten minutes, fifteen minutes)? \_\_\_\_\_

## Self-Survey II

**Directions:** Answer questions 1–9. Compare the answers to the first six questions to those on your first self-survey. Then, write on the back of this sheet three to five goals you have for your own writing and a sentence for each describing how you might achieve those goals. Use this scale to answer questions 1, 2, and 3:

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Not at all                      Somewhat                      Extremely

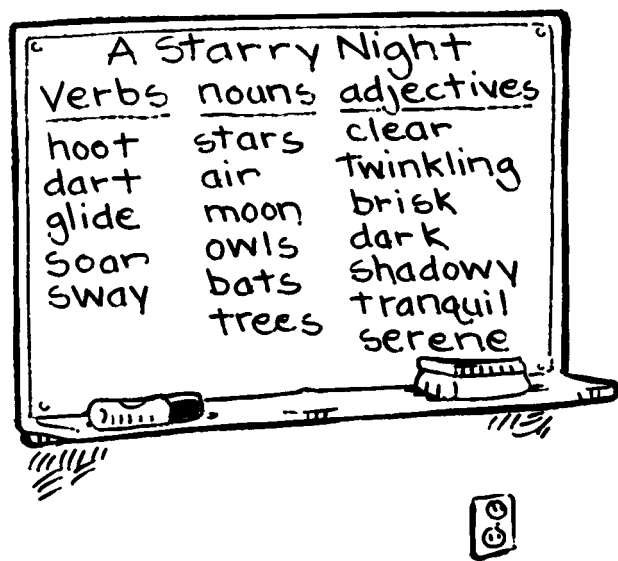
1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you enjoy writing? \_\_\_\_\_
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, how well do you feel you write? \_\_\_\_\_
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important do you think it is to write well? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you write for your own pleasure outside of class? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What kinds of writing do you enjoy the most (e.g., letter, story, report)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. If you had free time to write about topics of your choice each day, how many minutes would you like to write on self-selected topics (e.g., ten minutes, fifteen minutes)? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Which topics on which you wrote recently were most interesting to you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What kind of progress do you feel you have made in your writing so far this year? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. How do the prompts help or hinder you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# The Expressive Writing Domain

The expressive writing domain contains products such as poetry, friendly letters, and journals. To write effectively in the expressive domain, students must master literary devices, including sensory detail, alliteration, simile, and metaphor. Provide students with a foundation for writing effectively across the curriculum by teaching them to write material that is vivid, descriptive, stimulating, and inspiring or in some way evokes emotion or inspires action from the reader.

## Student Background Knowledge

Tap into students' background knowledge by learning about their interests, emotions, and responses to the world around them. For example, you can explore background vocabulary by having students create group word banks that reflect their responses to a beautiful sunset, a starry night, or an ominous thunderhead. As students write verbs, nouns, and adjectives related to these aspects of nature, you become increasingly familiar with their personal vocabulary. Having students brainstorm vocabulary banks prior to CDW is one way to provide reluctant authors with a place to start.

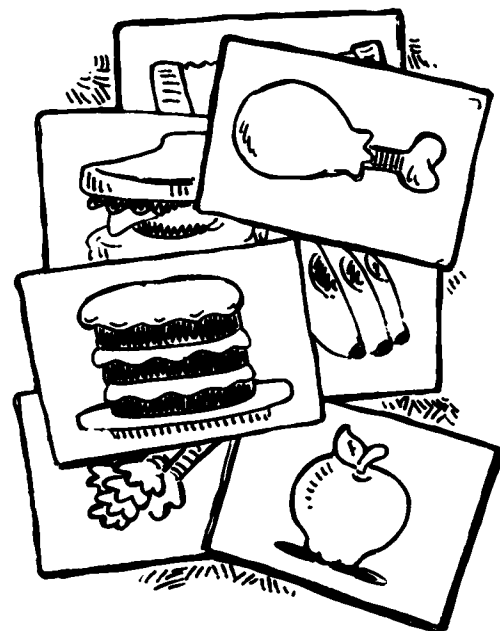


## Career Application

Everyone needs to write for some part of his or her job. Clarity is essential. Representing ourselves well on paper may make or break a career. Throughout your writing lessons and CDW, emphasize to students the importance of audience. Tell students that in any writing situation, they must be keenly aware of the reader. Direct students to keep the audience in mind when selecting appropriate vocabulary. Have students identify the audience when they choose their prompts.

## Making the Most of the Writing Process

Have student or parent volunteers cut out interesting pictures from travel magazines and other periodicals. Have them use spray glue to carefully mount these pictures on construction paper. Laminate the mounted pictures for durability. Keep them in file folders organized by topic for easy retrieval and frequent use. The photographs can provide an easy springboard for a student whose imagination needs igniting. For example, perhaps you have assigned writing prompts for Olfactory Sensory Detail (page 14), and you have a student who is not interested in any of the prompts. Invite him or her to choose a picture from the file of foods and his or her creative juices will immediately begin to flow.





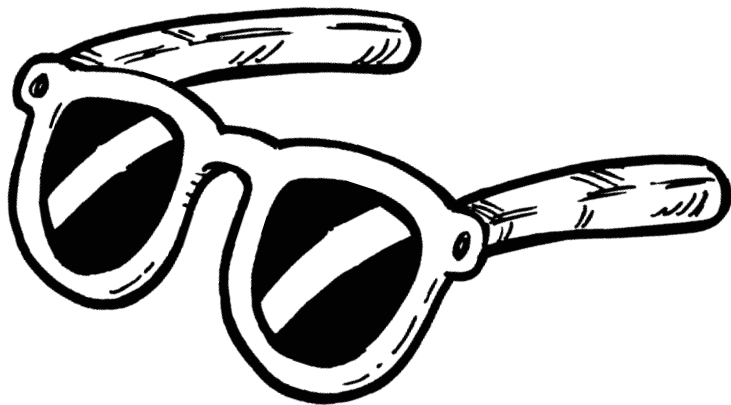
# The Mind's Eye

## ***Critical Components of Visual Sensory Detail***

- Use words and phrases that vividly describe the sense of sight (e.g., *Clear skies and bright sunshine melt the snow, revealing the leafless branches of the surrounding forests*).
- Use specific nouns to replace common nouns (e.g., *tulips* instead of *flowers*).

- Brainstorm descriptive adjectives for the following subjects: a baby lion cub, a deserted cabin, and an erupting volcano. Choose one subject and use your adjectives to write a "word picture."
- Frances Hodgson Burnett had a garden of 300 rosebushes at her home in England. This was her favorite place on earth and where she was inspired to write *The Secret Garden*. Describe your favorite location and explain why this place is so special.
- Brainstorm as many concrete nouns (objects, not ideas) as you can for items you might find in one or more of the following places: a deserted island, a crowded city, an amusement park, and a meadow in springtime. Choose one place and use your concrete nouns to write a descriptive paragraph.
- Use an imaginary zoom lens to write a word picture. Describe your school, starting with a long shot, and then zoom in to provide visual detail for a specific area, such as the playground or the library.
- Think of your favorite holiday. Write a paragraph describing how you and your family celebrate it. Use concrete nouns and descriptive phrases to write a word picture of your celebration.
- Think back to a special time you recently experienced (e.g., a picnic, a party, or a shopping spree). Record the emotions you had during this event. Write a paragraph that captures these emotions
- Wild Card:** What are four animals you would not want to be? Explain your answer.

- Free Choice**



# Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

## Critical Components of Auditory Sensory Detail

- Use words and phrases that vividly describe the sense of sound (e.g., *The child's sobs pierced the heart of her mother*).
- Use onomatopoeia—words that sound similar to the sound they describe (e.g., *swish, bark, thump*).

Use several of the following onomatopoeic words in a paragraph describing the sounds you hear at a basketball game: *dribble, stomp, creak, thump, swish, roar*.

Michelangelo, the Italian artist and sculptor, spent more than four years on a scaffold, head bent back, 60 feet in the air, painting the enormous ceiling design of the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican in Rome. Imagine that you are Michelangelo. What sounds would you hear around you, or from the people below you, in the enormous church?

Think of your favorite amusement park. List the sounds you might hear if you stayed at the park from opening to closing. What activities are associated with these sounds?

You are alone—lost in a vast rain forest. There is no moon and everything around you is pitch black. You can see nothing, but your ears are exploding with sounds. Describe what you hear.

Choose several of your favorite colors. Brainstorm sounds that represent each color (e.g., *White sounds like snowflakes drifting from the sky. Red sounds like drums beating wildly*).

You are a pet spider brought to school by your owner in a matchbox, which has been shoved inside a pocket. It is lunchtime and you find yourself in the cafeteria. Describe the sounds you hear.

**Wild Card:** Jackie Robinson was the first African American baseball player to play on a major team, the Brooklyn Dodgers. The theme of his whole life was breaking down barriers between people. If you could break down any barrier in the world today, what would it be? Why?

**Free Choice**

