

The Top Ten Ways
to Turn Your
Students off Writing
FOREVER!!



1. Don't share excellent literature with your students, and ignore the link between real books and the writing students produce.
2. Assign writing as punishment for inappropriate behavior.
3. Edit, revise, re-edit and re-revise every piece of work students write.
4. Assign writing only when you have a substitute or you've run out of things to do.
5. Never let students share what they've written with other students.
6. Never provide the opportunity for students to share, illustrate and display their work.
7. Have your students use planners and organizers every time they embark on a writing project.
8. Practice writing only around standardized test time.
9. Assign imaginary prompts as the only form of creative writing.
10. Focus strictly on paragraph and essay writing.

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Starting with Stories and Poems



In this section you will find:

-  Understanding paragraph writing
-  Elements of a story
-  Steps in the writing process
-  Story activities for the writing center
-  Solving the mystery of poetry
-  Poetry activities for the writing center

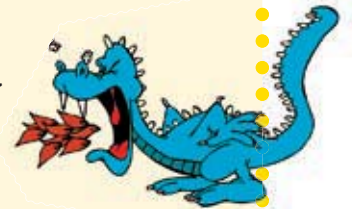
Abstract/Story Paragraph

A STORY PARAGRAPH CAN BE MADE UP OF THREE PARTS:

1. Hook: an exciting sentence(s) that grabs the reader's attention and makes them want to keep reading.
2. Details: the details bring the reader into the story, providing details through the use of vivid word choice, and voice. The purpose of the details is to **show** the reader what is happening by appealing to the senses, instead of just **telling** them what is going on.
3. Closing: transitions reader smoothly into the next part of the story.

SAMPLE:

I was sitting at the table, minding my own business, just trying to eat my supper when they dropped the news. "We're moving." Dad announced. Whammo! Just like that—in the same voice he'd use to ask me to pass the salt. I couldn't keep chewing. Intense heat was creeping across my face, and my palms were so sweaty. I tried to get up, but my body felt like lead. Looking around the table I could no longer see my parents; just a cloudy blur of faces. "Clanng!!" My fork hit the ground. Struggling to keep from fainting, I slowly slid from my chair towards the floor. "Don't worry darling" Mom smiled, "I'll get you another fork."



Start teaching paragraph writing from the beginning of the year.

As you can see, there are similarities between the two paragraph styles but subtle differences as well. In the concrete paragraph on the left the topic is introduced, discussed with details, and wrapped up. In the paragraph on the right, the style is a little freer, and provides the reader with sensory details instead of factual details. And, while an abstract paragraph usually consists of at least three parts, there is more flexibility with these paragraphs—they can be quite long or as short as a sentence or two.

When writing a story, the story idea is the focus, and paragraphing becomes a tool by which the writer develops the idea. Proper paragraphing can help

transition time from one section to the next, or show a change in speakers or ideas. Regardless of which paragraph style is being used, proper paragraphing is an important aspect of good writing.

Children need to have an understanding of paragraphs in order to use them properly in their writing. **This does not mean that they can't write a story until they understand paragraphs**—they absolutely can—just don't expect their writing to be broken into paragraphs, and be prepared during editing to indicate where new paragraphs will be needed. However, with practice, once students understand how to create and write a basic paragraph, they can then apply the concept to their creative story writing. The following lessons are designed to introduce the components of basic paragraph writing. These lessons should be taught during the first few weeks of school and then revisited and expanded during the year.

Graphic organizers can be used to help students organize their ideas and are useful when teaching paragraph writing. A selection of graphic organizers is included at the end of this section. As well, each lesson requires the students to have with them their writing workshop supplies. These supplies should include:

- a spiral notebook
- an eraser
- a ruler
- scissors
- glue
- coloring utensils (crayons, markers, colored pencils)
- a thin and thick black permanent marker



Make sure your students attempt to write paragraphs even though they may not have mastered all the skills necessary to do so.



Defining the Elements of Good Writing

Story writing is a process. For some children it is easy, while for others it's as daunting as climbing a mountain. Ask teachers about story writing and you get very much the same response—they either love teaching it or hate it.

A well-written story is a combination of many elements. Teaching children to write good stories is difficult because not only do you have to teach them about all the different elements, but you also need to show them how all the different parts fit and work together, and how—by tweaking just one of these elements—the writer can affect the entire story. Of all the complications involved, the most challenging thing to teach your students is how to write the *what* and the *how* into every story—the *what* being the elements of a good story and the *how* being the way the elements are presented to the reader.

Writing the *what* into each story means getting students to make sure that their writing contains the following key story elements (*what* they write):



Including all the key story elements does not automatically result in an engaging story.



CHARACTERS:	the main people featured in the story
SETTING:	the time and the place where the story occur
HOOK:	the sentences found in the first few paragraphs of a story that make the reader keep reading
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FIRST EVENT:	something that contributes to the problem
PROBLEM:	the major complication of the story
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SECOND EVENT:	something that contributes to the solution
SOLUTION:	how the problem is solved
WRAP UP:	how the story finally ends

Writing the *how* into each story means making sure that, once all the above elements are included, the writing is of high quality, contains a variety of writing techniques, uses vivid details and, most importantly, is interesting for a reader (*how* its written). Has the author:

- used similies and metaphors?
- included a variety of punctuation?
- featured characters that speak using direct conversation?
- written sentences that are varied in their structure?
- thought about the audience’s reaction to the story?
- selected enticing words that liven up the story?

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Writing with *how* in mind *shows* the reader what is happening instead of *telling* him, as illustrated below in these third grade writing samples:

**This is
writing that tells:**

The leaves changed color.

I was scared before I sang at the concert. My costume looked good but I was nervous. I felt relieved and my manager was proud.

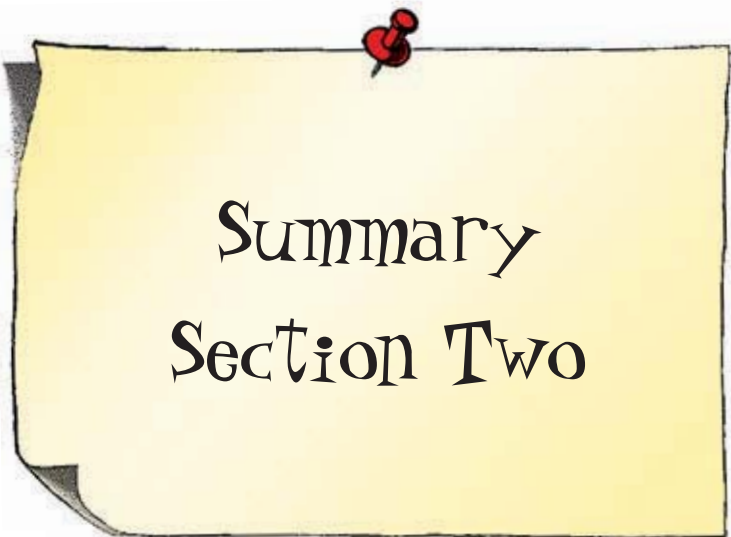


**This is
writing that shows:**

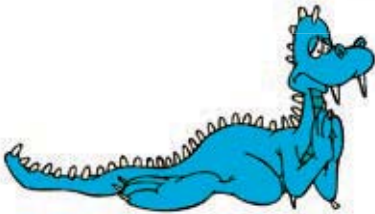
In the cold fall air all the trees’ green leaves sprang into beautiful color. — By Stephanie W.

...I was a little scared but the opera was like heaven and I was an angel ready to take flight. My costume was very nice and I know that my mother thought I looked beautiful. My heart was pumping so hard but when I sang I relaxed. The crowd cheered like a roaring pack of lions charging, pounding towards their prey. I too felt the sun shining on me from the heavens as I sang. The sun shining on me felt like my mother’s hot breath. I sang from my heart. I sang with love, hate and sadness. When I sang I knew the people who were listening felt my feelings and I saw my manager had a tear in his eye...

— by Olivia M.



Summary Section Two



Writing stories teaches children the elements of writing while allowing their imaginations to soar. Writing poetry allows students to break the more conventional rules of writing as they explore and write about the world in a totally different way.

- ★ You can teach creative writing without teaching paragraph writing but, in order for the story to be strong, the students need to have direct instruction and experiment with paragraph writing.
- ★ The *what* in story writing includes all the important story elements of character, setting, hook, events, problems, solutions, and wrap up. By including the *what*, students are using all the fundamental components that make up a well-written story.
- ★ The *how* in story writing means combining the *what* (see above) with age-appropriate writing techniques to show the reader what is happening in the story instead of merely telling them. Students who can successfully put the *how* into their writing create stories with vivid details that unfold in the reader's mind.
- ★ No matter what writing program your school uses, there are essential components found in all good writing: thoughts, sequence, descriptive words, mood, grammar, and final presentation. Teaching students about these essentials will help them write imaginative, well-constructed stories.

- ★ To end up with a well-written piece of work, students should follow the steps in P.R.R.E.P. – pre-writing, rough draft writing, revising, editing, and publishing. However, not all writing projects will need to go through all of the steps all of the time. You will need to decide which writing projects should be carried through to the publication phase and which should remain as a rough draft.
- ★ Use brainstorming activities to generate ideas with the children and a story planner or writing conference to help organize the results before beginning a rough draft. The draft should be revised to ensure all important elements are included. Editing should be done with a peer or with the teacher before the students move on to publishing their work.
- ★ Planners and checklists can be a helpful way for students to learn about organizing and revising their stories.
- ★ Violence in children’s writing is a bit of a Pandora’s Box, and there is really no easy or definitive answer as to what constitutes an “acceptable” level of violence in their work. It is a largely subjective definition yet, despite this, there are some general observations about violence in the typical writing of children that can be made: boys tend to write more violent stories than girls, not all violence in their stories is necessarily bad, and, regardless of how we feel about it, violence is part of what we’ve accepted as a society—the society in which these students are being raised.
- ★ If violence in a story, such as an alien attack, is pivotal to the plot development then it might be okay to let it go. However, it is always best to show students alternative ways to handle the problems in their stories that don’t revolve around shooting, stabbing, or being blown up. As a teacher, you must decide how much violence is too much and stick with your decision. At a minimum, you should be familiar (and not necessarily in favor of) your school’s policy on this issue.
- ★ Don’t be intimidated at the thought of teaching poetry. Start out small with easier types of poems and go on from there. Be sure to include poetry activities in your writing center.