

THE COMPLETE WRITER

Writing With Ease

A Plan for Writing Well
in the Early Grades

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Overall Plan

Elementary grades (1-4): Writing with ease

Learning basic grammar and style, basic sentence structure, and paragraph structure.

Method: grammar, copying, and dictation.

Middle grades (5-8): Writing with skill

Learning how to organize sentences into arguments that prove specific points.

Method: diagramming, outlining, outlining and rewriting, narrative compositions

High school (9-12): Writing with style

Learning how to argue original points and ideas.

Method: modelling and the progymnasmata

Elementary Grade Students

Three sets of skills taught simultaneously:

Basic skills in grammar/

Basic skills in spelling/

Basic skills in writing

Elementary Grammar

Systematic grammar and punctuation

Goal: explicit knowledge of the rules that govern the conventions of sentence-writing

Grades 1-2: Primarily oral

English for the Thoughtful Child

First Language Lessons for the Well-Trained Mind

Grades 3-4: Move towards written work

First Language Lessons

Rod & Staff

Voyages in English

Elementary Spelling

Beginning exposure to spelling rules and lists

Goal: gaining knowledge of the rules that govern the spelling of English words and the punctuation of written work.

Spelling Workout (Modern Curriculum Press)

Spelling Power (Castlemoyle Press)

Caution: may not see transference to written work in early grades

Basic grammar

3x per week

Primarily oral, Grades 1-2

Move towards written, Grades 3-4

Basic spelling

2-3x per week

Writing?

Mechanics:

Proper pencil grip

Continuous stroke or italic

Typing lessons, beginning in
fourth grade

The steps in writing:

INARTICULATE IDEA ----->
IDEA IN WORDS

IDEA IN WORDS ----->
WORDS ON PAPER

Elementary Writing, Part One

Putting words on paper: Copywork

First grade: Copy sentences every day from good writers

Second grade Write single sentences from dictation

Third grade: Write two to three sentences at a time from dictation

Fourth grade: Write paragraphs from dictation

Purposes:

Create a visual memory of proper written language

Form a visual picture of proper written language from spoken words

Hold words in head long enough to get them down on paper

Techniques for copywork:

Begin with short sentences.

Watch the student as she writes and correct mistakes **as she begins to make them.**

Give all necessary help in spelling and punctuation.

Techniques for dictation:

Repeat until student can repeat back to you

Warn student of upcoming punctuation challenges

Use your voice to indicate punctuation and other elements

Give all necessary help in spelling and punctuation

Repeat selection **from the beginning** as many times as necessary.

EXAMPLES

First grade:

Pa owned a pig.

to

Millions and millions of grasshoppers were eating now. You could hear the millions of jaws biting and chewing.

Second grade:

The soup was dark purple. And what did it taste of?
Pepper!

EXAMPLES

Third grade:

"Where do you come from?" said the Red Queen.
"And where are you going? Look up, speak nicely,
don't twiddle your fingers all the time."

Fourth grade:

Coffee was a treat, and Hannah showed great tact in making it that morning. No one could resist her persuasive nods, or the fragrant invitation issuing from the nose of the coffee pot.

Elementary Writing, Part Two

Putting ideas into words: Narration across the curriculum

First and second grade: Narrate to parent

Second and third grade: Narrate to parent and take
dictation

Fourth grade: Narrate to tape recorder

Purposes: Develops skill in original expression without
demanding creativity in content

Teaches student to identify the central elements of narratives

Techniques

First through third grade: Guided narration

First:

What are two things you remember about what we read?

What was the most interesting thing that we read?

What was the most important thing that we read?

Second and third: Ask questions about central events

Fourth:

“What happened?”

"Come hither, Little One," said the Crocodile, "for I am the Crocodile," and he wept crocodile-tears to show it was quite true.

Then the Elephant's Child grew all breathless, and panted, and kneeled down on the bank and said, "You are the very person I have been looking for all these long days. Will you please tell me what you have for dinner?"

"Come hither, Little One," said the Crocodile, "and I'll whisper."

Then the Elephant's Child put his head down close to the Crocodile's musky, tusky mouth, and the Crocodile caught him by his little nose, which up to that very week, day, hour, and minute, had been no bigger than a boot, though much more useful.

"I think, said the Crocodile--and he said it between his teeth, like this--"I think to-day I will begin with Elephant's Child!"

At this, O Best Beloved, the Elephant's Child was much annoyed, and he said, speaking through his nose, like this, "Led go! You are hurtig be!"

...Then the Elephant's Child sat back on his little haunches, and pulled, and pulled, and pulled, and his nose began to stretch. And the Crocodile floundered into the water, making it all creamy with great sweeps of his tail, and he pulled, and pulled, and pulled.

And the Elephant's Child's nose kept on stretching; and the Elephant's Child spread all his little four legs and pulled, and pulled, and pulled, and his nose kept on stretching; and the Crocodile threshed his tail like an oar, and he pulled, and pulled, and pulled, and at each pull the Elephant's Child's nose grew longer and longer--and it hurt him hijjus!

Then the Elephant's Child felt his legs slipping, and he said through his nose, which was now nearly five feet long, "This is too butch for be!"

...The Elephant's Child pulled, and the Crocodile pulled; but the Elephant's Child...pulled hardest; and at last the Crocodile let go of the Elephant's Child's nose with a plop that you could hear all up and down the Limpopo.

Then the Elephant's Child sat down most hard and sudden...and next he was kind to his poor pulled nose, and wrapped it all up in cool banana leaves, and hung it in the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo to cool.

“Can you tell me in three sentences what happened in this story?”

What did the Elephant's Child ask the Crocodile?
What did the Crocodile do?
What was the end result?

What you're looking for:

"The Elephant's Child found the Crocodile and asked him what he had for dinner. The Crocodile said that he would eat Elephant's Child! He grabbed the Elephant Child's nose and stretched it out into a trunk."

The place of creative writing

Definition: writing which is done without the help of a written model that provides content

The Challenge....

Summary of Elementary Writing

Basic grammar

3x per week

Primarily oral, Grades 1-2

Move towards written, Grades 3-4

Basic spelling

2-3x per week

Copywork/Dictation

3x per week

History, literature, science

Narration

3x per week

History, literature, science