

HOMESCHOOL WRITING INSTRUCTION GUIDE



PRIMARY GRADES (K – 3)

I'm sure it's no secret to you that children develop at different rates. One child may possess remarkable fine-motor skills, yet she struggles to speak a coherent sentence. Another talks circles around his siblings, but his handwriting leaves much to be desired. This disparity is often more obvious during the primary years, when most children are either *emerging writers* with little or no ability to write or *developing writers* who are still learning early writing skills. Developing writing skills takes patience and practice. To assist you, the parent, in building those skills, I offer the following instructional guidance.



THREE WAYS TO HELP YOUR PRIMARY CHILD BUILD WRITING SKILLS

1. Let Go of Comparisons with Other Children . . . and Stress

These early elementary years—typically kindergarten through third grade—produce a great deal of growth in most children, but if your little one doesn't seem to be following the pack, **take a deep breath and accept that it's okay.** Meanwhile, make sure your writing time is spent *together*, and that you **build instruction from your child's own efforts** rather than from artificial expectations. For example, if he's great at telling stories, but cries if you make him write anything down himself, **let him dictate to you as you write his words.** **Meanwhile, do a lot of art activities that involve drawing, tracing, and coloring. From there, he can go to copying words and sentences that you have written.**

Because **fine-motor skills vary from child to child**, don't be distressed if your youngster has a hard time holding a pencil correctly, writing on a line, forming letters and words, or demonstrating neat penmanship. The important thing is to model pencil grip, good letter formation, and keeping within the lines. Be patient as he learns to follow the same patterns to make his letters. Tracing over Mommy's is a good beginning practice.

The most important part of writing is instilling a desire to write, just as a child must want to read before a child will put forth the effort to do so. Here are some of the ways to develop that desire:

Write for a Reason:

- Display the best writing on the refrigerator
- Make a book, drawing pictures and making a cover
- Read written stories to Mommy & Daddy, siblings, and friends
- Write a letter and mail it or give it to the recipient
- Have a family mailbox where the child can leave a note for a family member and the family member can respond.
- Write shopping lists, recipes, signs, and posters.
- Make reading AND writing a part of everyday life for both you and the child.

2. Embrace Repetition and Routine

Have you ever noticed that your littles never tire of reading the same book or singing the same songs over and over . . . and *over* again? It's one of the main ways children absorb information, and the sooner we accept that, the more likely learning will take place.

Keep to a Schedule

Repetition, routine, and consistency play a major part in nurturing young writers. Since primary-age children thrive in this environment, you may have to sideline your own fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants tendencies as you devote yourself to keeping a schedule, building bit by bit on their emerging skills, and nurturing your young writers in the way they learn best. **Write everyday! Routine is your friend!**

3. Focus on Age-Appropriate K-2 Writing Skills

Too often, homeschool parents neglect teaching children how to think about and plan a story. *They just assign it.* Instead, **give young children tools to experience success** as they develop the ability to write by teaching them in steps. Brainstorm; plan a beginning, middle, and end; *then dictate* the story before writing. Expect your child to write or dictate **5- to 7-sentence** stories. A more articulate child may show interest and inclination to write longer pieces—and that’s great. Just don’t force it. Make sure your children crawl before they walk!

How Much Writing and How Often for a K-2nd Grader?

- Devote **5 days a week** to the writing process. Writing everyday is critical to developing ability to print with ease.
- Spend **10-30 minutes max per session** on writing activities, depending on age and attention span. You may have more than one session a day, integrated into other subjects the child is studying.
- If your child is having trouble with letter formation, expect less than from a child who can fluently form letters and words.

Typical Writing Progression for the K-2nd Grader

1. *Can write a letter, then a word, and finally a group of words.* At this stage, students are working on letter formation. Meanwhile, orally developing the beginning, middle, and end stories and having Mommy write them down can greatly contribute to a child’s later abilities.
2. *Can write a complete sentence, with capital and period.* At this stage, students are learning to read books. Note the sentence formation, punctuation, and spacing of sentences and paragraphs in the book. This will assist the child to be able to write their own sentences and paragraphs. Copying sentences is helpful at this point.
3. *Can write a paragraph.* Begin with 3 sentences: a beginning, middle, and end. Grow to 5-7 sentence paragraphs. Brainstorm, plan, tell, and then write. Writing letters to relatives, neighbors, friends, and even local businesses that the student visits can really help in building paragraph skills. Letters are often the best first introduction to writing a draft, editing, and then writing a final product since they will want their letters to look perfect for the recipient!
4. *Can write three paragraphs with an introduction, story development, and conclusion.* How-to directions, sequencing stories (first, then, finally), and compare and contrast essays are good writing projects. Remember the steps: brainstorm, plan, tell, write rough draft, edit, write final product, and then present, display, and/or publish the wonderful result!