

# Fluency Through Writing

## Table of Contents

Goals	p. 2, 3
Washington State Writing Standard	p. 3
Author's Background	p. 4
Philosophy	p. 4
Getting Started	p. 5
Dialogue Journals	p. 5
Nuts and Bolts	p. 5
Low Level Class	p. 5
Warm up Activities/Mini-lessons	p. 6, 7
Writing	p. 8
Post-Feedback	p. 8-10
Writing Topics	p. 12-15
Other Prompts	p. 16
Why Poetry	p. 17
Memory Poems	p. 17
Haiku	p. 18, 19
Writing with Precision	p. 20, 21
A Poem to Someone	p. 21, 22
Cut-up Poems	p. 23
Playing Around with Existing Poems	p. 23-25
Pieces of Advice	p. 26
Cinquains and Diamond Poems	p. 27
Diary of an Inanimate Object	p. 28
More Memory Poems	p. 29
Non-Rhyming Pattern Poems	p. 30
Poetry as a Prompt	p. 31, 32
Examples of Poetry	p. 33-39
Bibliography	p. 40, 41
Worksheet Explanation	p. 42
Key to Color Coded Corrections	p. 43
Editing Checklist	p. 44
Formatting	p. 45
Story Outline	p. 46, 47

## Fluency Through Writing

Updated summer 2010

Submitted by C. Duva

“Stories happen to those who tell them.”

Thucydides

### Goals

The goal of our writing curriculum, including the writing support classes, is language acquisition through writing. This document addresses the writing support class specifically, but it should also inform how you approach writing in your level classes.

We are creating a space for students to become deeply involved in their writing. We want to encourage students to develop their fluency, find their voices and use writing as a tool for thinking. We want students to develop confidence in their ability to express themselves and convince them that they have something to say. We also want students to be self-motivated and independent learners so they can use these habits and strategies in pursuit of their goals. We are working on both the writer and the writing.

The emphasis on fluency does not preclude attention to the principles of good writing, as you will see. We encourage students to interact with their text, to look at what they have written, to decide if it is good or can be built on, to clearly understand what they are trying to convey—to make them critical readers! But it is important to keep in mind that writing well is a skill for both native and non-native speakers. It is much easier to write well, and learn to write for academic purposes, when you can wield the language fluently.

Our current writing rubric consists of four categories: content, organization, grammar, mechanics. Of course all four categories are important, but remember that once students leave ESOL, their ABE and Development Education writing classes are not going to focus on the right half of that rubric. ESOL classes are the place ESOL students will learn to write fluently. If their goals include further education, they will have opportunity to learn and practice the skill of writing. I have talked to Dev. Ed teachers. They are not concerned with verb tense. They do work with fragments, run-ons, comma splices, and the function of coordinating conjunctions. But mostly they are concerned with critical thinking, the construction of an argument, summary vs. analysis vs. synthesis, evaluation of sources, organization and support of ideas. These are skills that require a basic fluency with the language in order to do well.

The goals for students exiting ESOL level 6 include:

- the ability to express themselves fluently with grammatical accuracy

- the ability to develop and support a controlling idea

- a command of mechanics and spelling

- an awareness of cohesion, coherence, and organization and an understanding of how these work to shape a piece of writing

These are the goals we need to be moving toward. By focusing on the personal narrative in our program, students work with subjects with built in organization and high familiarity and interest.

A word on formulaic writing: In any piece of authentic writing that students will do, form emerges from content and what the author wants to say, and not the other way around. Any writing situation that a student will encounter in her professional or personal life will come without a prompt and will demand independent thinking. You would be hard pressed to find an authentic text with a topic sentence followed by three supporting details strung together with “first,” “second,” “third.” I have often had the disheartening experience of having students try to add a bunch of connecting words to a piece of writing with meaning going out the window. What they ended up with was a piece of writing that made no sense because form was shoehorned onto content.

Choosing form is part of critical thinking. Let’s say I want to write about a pet. After brainstorming the idea in a variety of ways, I decide to write about my dog Inkspot. Not only do I want to describe him, I want to compare him to another dog, Lassie. They actually were nothing alike, so I will describe how they were different, except in one important way, which will be my last, climactic point. I will approach my writing task much differently if I decide that what I want to write about is how I taught my dog Dozer to play catch with me. This will be a process, so maybe those process words (first, second, third) will come in handy here. My approach will be different if I decide that what I really want to write about is my childhood dog, Mickey. At least three different approaches—depending on what I want to say.

### **Washington State Writing Standard**

The standard is as follows:

- Determine the purpose for communicating.
- Organize and present information to serve the purpose.
- Pay attention to conventions of English language usage, including grammar, spelling, and sentence structure, to minimize barriers to reader’s comprehension.
- Seek feedback and revise to enhance the effectiveness of the communication.

The short descriptor is as follows:

Show fluency, independence, and ability to perform the above indicators in a range of settings.

We believe our writing curriculum fits beautifully with the newly revised writing standards for adult education in the state of Washington.

## **My Background**

I have been very interested in writing for many years. I've thought a lot about it, read a lot about it, and tried a lot of different approaches. I set up and ran the writing module in two different programs. I developed the writing support class for our program. I have tried my best in the following document, to give proper credit for specific ideas, but undoubtedly, I have, over the years, been influenced by sources that have not been properly credited. For this I apologize. I can however, credit the following writers with loads of influence: Lucy Calkins, Peter Elbow, Mina Shaughnessy, Ann Raimes, Rachel Martin, and most recently, Andy Nash, with whom I worked during last year's Writing Standards workshops.

## **Philosophy**

*Writing is not filling up a pond. It is turning on a faucet.*

(I read this somewhere and I think it is true. I also read the following description somewhere. It nicely summarizes what we are after.)

What do you want to say? Get that clear in your head.

Unify it.

Organize it.

Use the best words you know.

Throw away the rest.

Students need to be internalizing the questions: What am I trying to say?  
How does it sound? Where is this leading me?

In both levels of writing support, (a low level support class is in the process of being developed), I encourage students to play with language. The heavy use of poems, pictures, and various prompts in the service of increased fluency goes hand in hand with developing writing skills. As you read through this material, you will note ways to practice, for example, narrowing your focus, using specific rather than general language, using direct speech, developing a topic, using transitions and connecting words, along with the practice of spelling, mechanics, and grammar.

Everything proceeds from the students' own writing, and in both levels of the support class, you have to start from where the student is. There will likely be wildly different levels of ability in the same class. A student's progress results from her sustained effort to write a lot, think about her writing, talk to you about her writing, work with the feedback you provide, and write some more. The more effort a student makes, the more progress she makes because the more a student writes, the more she has to work with, talk about, and think about. If your class is scheduled in the lab, your students will have the opportunity to use the word processing programs on the computers.

I encourage you to make it clear to students that language acquisition through writing is work and that if they sign up for the class and take a seat, their commitment is for the entire quarter. It is not a drop-in sort of class.

## **Getting Started**

I always ask my students what is hard for them about writing, and then I ask them what the best thing about writing is. I ask them how they think writing improves. I hand out my syllabus where they can read my ideas about it. I ask them how they find something to write about. I explain the idea of fluency. I show them the writing rubric. I remind them often that my job is to help them find a topic they care about and then help them say what they want to say about it in fluent English. I encourage them to respond to the events of their lives. I explain that native speakers take writing classes too because writing well is a skill, but before you can learn to write really well, it helps to be able to express your thoughts fluently.

I explain the difference between revision and editing. Re-vision means to look again. In this process you may find that what you really want to write about is buried in the story. Or maybe isn't there yet. It may involve adding, removing, rearranging, expanding. The purpose of revision is to discover, not to correct. Only when you have something to say will we turn out attention to editing. Editing is concerned with grammar, punctuation, spelling.

I explain that writing is discovering. Sometimes you have to write before you figure out what you want to say. (Outlines may be more useful after you write, to look at what you have said and help you organize it better.) Write-reflect-write-reflect. I heard someone say once that it's all rewriting, backwards and forwards and not really a linear process, despite the heavy emphasis on pre-write/first draft/revise/edit/publish. Writers talk about writing being messy, and meaning being what you end up with, not what you start with.

## **Dialogue Journals**

I always give my student the opportunity to do a dialogue journal with me throughout the quarter. I do not make corrections in their journal, but I may rephrase what they have said and incorporate a correction into my reply. I explain the journal as a written conversation with me. I tell them that I will respond in kind to their length. One sentence gets one sentence back. A page gets a page back.

## **The Nuts and Bolts of the Classroom**

I have divided the following material into three sections: warm-up activities, writing activities, post-writing activities (including conferencing). If something is pointedly different for the low vs. the high level writing support class, I will note it. Otherwise, I believe these materials can be adapted for use at all levels.

## **A Word about the Low Level Support Class**

You may have to experiment with moving the editing up in the process before content can be addressed - just because students produce very little, or what they do produce is hard to understand. If you are struggling with getting students to produce a quantity of writing, here are some ideas. If you think about playing around with language, I believe you will find ways to work on fluency.

- For example, find pictures in magazines or elsewhere of people expressing a range of emotions. Have students label the emotions and write explanations of why they might feel that way.
- Or brainstorm words for one season changing into another—and then create written pictures: splashing in a puddle at the bus stop, cutting the heads off dead flowers in the garden, etc.
- You might also try having on-going short conferences. That is, a student writes a sentence, shows it to you. You do a focused rewrite. (Write what the student wants to say in standard English.) The student copies the corrected sentence, and writes another one.
- Or, students write a few sentences, and underline what they are not sure of. You look, and correct. Or you underline parts and the student corrects it. Or you read a corrected version and the student makes their own corrections on the paper.
- Or give very explicit instructions: underline the verb. Circle the subject. Whenever you work with errors it is useful to distinguish errors of carelessness vs. errors rooted in misunderstanding.

Our department ordered a book this summer from Pro Lingua called Writing Inspirations. I'm a little underwhelmed by it, but it does have stacks of ideas for generating writing at all levels. The book is reproducible, so I will have it copied and available if anyone would like to use it.

The basic idea for the low level prompts is to provide a picture and some key vocabulary and have the students write some sentences about the picture. Some classes could generate their own word list, and some teachers could find more interesting pictures, but the idea could work for a class warm up. As the prompts get more involved—sequences of pictures, or photos, objects, conversations, instructions, email, memories, anecdotes, proverbs, interviews, surveys, advice, etc., there is more opportunity for students to insert content that is more meaningful to them personally. The book really does have a lot of suggestions to prompt writing, and it worth looking at.

### **Warm-up Activities: Mini lessons**

Although grammar is usually addressed in the context of an individual's needs in a one-on-one conference, it is sometimes the case that many students could benefit from a mini lesson on a common problem. For example, let's say you have identified verb tenses as a common problem. Provide some prompt—pictures work well--- and have students take 10 minutes to comment on them. Collect the papers and put sentences on the board that illustrate the problem you've identified, in this case, tense problems. The class can do an error correction for the sentences on the board.

I also use mini lessons to introduce more sophisticated aspects of grammar and of writing. For example, to introduce direct vs. reported speech I have shown students a student-written essay which I modified with various parts expressed both ways. We discuss which one works better in that context and why. Then I ask students to look through their recent work to see if there is a place that would benefit from reworking. If not, I encourage them to experiment with this in subsequent writing.

Other possible candidates for mini lesson explanations include:

pronouns,

modals,

connecting words (take out connecting words in a well-written text. The class discusses which words could work)

propositions,

word families,

clauses,

subject/verb agreement,

plurals,

too vs. very,

punctuation, (punctuate a paragraph together to help highlight the fact that punctuation has a purpose)

the difference between a topic and a title,

subjects and verbs,

options with two subjects and two verbs,

options with periods, semicolon, or connecting words

how to find a focus,

where to jump into a story,

how to find a controlling idea from a general topic

how to revise (this one from Andy Nash) (Select 5 unrelated words. Students make a short coherent text using all the words. Then add, delete, or change three things. Explain why.

Rachel Martin suggests taking a simple sentence like “Jane likes cake.” Students keep adding words and phrases. Students have to explain what they are doing. Or add sentences, keeping in mind what came before.

### **Other Warm-up Activities**

Reading as springboard or stimulus to writing can be inspirational, and it also exposes students to standard grammar, syntax and authentic language use. (Reading texts are not model paragraphs to copy.) In mixed level classes, the reading level of any text will need to accommodate the lowest level readers in the class. I’ve collected a lot of student writing over the years, and these texts are a great way to illustrate all sorts of things.

Pictures, quotations, video clips, questions, oral stories can all serve as prompts for warm-up writing. This writing can be done individually, in pairs, groups, as a class, read, exchanged, collected, or not. Warm-up writing does not need to be tailored to a mini lesson. Sometimes it’s useful just to get students moving their pens.

Old National Geographic magazines have very good pictures to use for this exercise.

- Each student writes a thought about the prompt, and then passes her paper to the person sitting next to her. That person reads the first comment, and responds to it. Continue until everyone has received their original paper.

### **Writing**

I often use a first response to a topic as a brainstorming exercise. Often it takes an actual piece of writing for students to identify their true topic. I can help them locate this in a conference by asking them what the most important thing is in their story. The standard brainstorming technique: lists, clusters, trees, can all be explained as options. I have also used the WH questions to explore a topic, generate details, and find a controlling idea. The main thing is to help students identify a controlling idea for their piece of writing.

If a student is keen or ready to shape a piece of writing even more, I use the sandwich analogy. The two slices of bread, top and bottom are the introduction and conclusion. There has to be some “meat” inside, and the condiments are the details.

Because I encourage students to find real topics that are important to them, I do not require them to share their writing with other students. If they want to, I like to do it this way. I set up a table and everyone has a chance to read their piece of writing. The listeners’ job is to identify the main thing the writer was saying. If they cannot do this, that is good information for the writer.

Producing an end of quarter book with everyone’s favorite piece is a nice way to end the quarter. This gives students a chance to share what they are comfortable sharing.

### **Post-Feedback**

I’ve tried many different ways to work with writing. What I’m going to describe is one way that has given good results. By that I mean I can see student progress and ownership over the process.

After students have produced a piece of writing, they hand it in. And then I talk to them about it.

There is no substitute for one-on-one conferencing with students. I set up my class to allow this to happen. If students write at home, as they are encouraged to do (we only meet 3 hours a week after all), they get to use more of class time in conference with me. If they come to class without anything, they have to spend class time writing.

Lucy Calkins has a great line— I’m paraphrasing--Good teaching in writing class means we are the one’s leaning forward in our seats. She says good listening will draw words out, and our job is to extend what a student can do.

The following are some things I’ve learned about conferencing.



Let the student talk first.

Encourage the student to recognize their own trouble spots-parts she is not sure about. Be reactive rather than prescriptive, giving impressions rather than directives. (Peter Elbow always talks about giving the writer information on your experience as a reader, but it is up to the writer to make the changes.)

From Andy Nash:

- Tell the author what you heard in the piece.
- If you were confused at some place, ask for clarification.
- Describe specifically what you liked.
- Ask what was hard about writing this piece.
- Describe the words or images that stood out.

Be clear whether the conference is about revising or editing. I also talk to students after they have tried to make edits with my color coded chart. (See below.) Sometimes I ask the student after a conference to try and revise their story without referring to the first draft. This illustrates the turning on the faucet vs. filling up the pond aspect of writing.

When a student is satisfied that what's on the paper is their best effort at saying what they want to say, I look at it with my highlighters. Everyone gets a key at the beginning of the quarter. I take time to go over examples so it is clear what the different colors represent. We often do a collective piece of writing that I mark upon a big sheet of butcher paper. We make the corrections together.

In my system,  
orange=verb problem, tense, conjugation, or missing  
green=word form problem (correct family, wrong part of speech)  
purple=wrong word  
pink=plurals, missing or unnecessary  
yellow=punctuation problem  
blue=spelling mistake  
red=word missing

I mark up the paper and hand it back. If a student is unable to make the correction, we can do it together in a subsequent conference. The purple is the hardest to correct on one's own because it may involve an unknown vocabulary word. But it is also really satisfying to help students expand their vocabulary by suggesting the word they are looking for in the context of their own writing.

One great advantage of this system is that a student can look at a paper and quickly see the kinds of problems she is having. If it is full of orange, I might give the student some supplemental work on verbs. I always encourage them to take chances in their writing, as that is the only way to push the boundary of what they know and feel comfortable with. I use the analogy of diving. A simple dive perfectly executed may not rack up as many points as a more difficult dive done imperfectly. The point is not to be careless and make mistakes.

The point is to take a chance in finding your voice, discovering what you have to say, and delivering your message in a way that other people can understand and appreciate it. Sophisticated ideas will need increasingly sophisticated ways to express them. And that is how a student becomes more fluent.

In her book, Listening Up, Rachel Marin makes the following point –What else is there to focus on beyond spelling when writing about what I had for breakfast? She argues that simple topics can be more difficult to write about because they take away complexity that makes working on an idea through writing such a satisfying experience.

She also points out that when writing is bland, the chances are students are trying to emulate some standard they are familiar with—or are choosing not to reveal something.

She offers other thoughts on conferencing that I agree with:

There is almost always more complexity to a piece than is there.

Ask the student to place a check where she has more to say.

Questions to Ask:

Is there more than one piece of writing here?

Where does this piece really begin?

Is there something here that doesn't fit?

What do you want your readers to know or feel at the end of your piece? Do you need to take out, change, add anything to accomplish this?

Do the first and last sentences still fit after the body has been revised?

Is there anything here to compare or contrast to highlight what you want to emphasize?

Should you change the order of your ideas?

Does this topic raise other issues for you?

Was there anything surprising on this page?

Do you have a scene in your head? Is there anyone's voice? Can you hear them?

What is the most important thing you are saying?

She suggests that for low level students, immediate feedback may be useful and/or necessary to help the student produce more writing. Have a mini-conference. Ask questions about what has been written.

- Here is an idea she calls fast details, used to brainstorm a topic. It works best with large stickies. Students write all the details they can think of in a few minutes. (words or phrases, not sentences.) Is there a focus for a first draft?
- Another of her ideas: Guided imagery: Topic: Home. It's August. It's hot. It's the middle of the morning. Where are you in your house? Who is around you? What are they saying or doing? What are the sounds and the smells? Students share and teacher copies words, phrases on the board. Students write a draft.

- She suggests blending group and individual efforts on a topic like culture shock. Individual stories can be part of the whole. The class can collectively write an introduction, the transitions, and an ending. Or students can choose to read their individual stories on a common topic. Other students write one word summaries that become a poetic introduction.

## Writing Topics:

These are topics to choose from for your stories. If you do not feel inspired by my topics, feel free to choose your own. The important thing is to write about something you care about.

- ❖ A building or a place that has meaning for you
- ❖ A game or favorite toy from childhood
- ❖ How you made it through a hard time
- ❖ Your journey to this country
- ❖ A possession that you value
- ❖ A time you were treated unfairly
- ❖ A difficult decision you have made
- ❖ How the lives of your children will be different from your life
- ❖ Work you have done that you liked
- ❖ Work you have done that you disliked
- ❖ A friend you no longer have
- ❖ An important letter you have sent or received
- ❖ An adventure in a city
- ❖ A favorite holiday
- ❖ An experience you have had teaching someone to do something
- ❖ Something you do that makes you tired
- ❖ Seeing a sunrise or a sunset
- ❖ First impressions of the USA
- ❖ The place you grew up
- ❖ Something you have created
- ❖ Something a child has told you lately
- ❖ A time you got into trouble
- ❖ A story about water
- ❖ An experience you have had which you consider a miracle
- ❖ Someone you admire
- ❖ A time you were afraid
- ❖ Someone you miss
- ❖ A kindness that was done to you
- ❖ Letting go of something (a person, an animal, an idea, a dream)
- ❖ A story about a relative
- ❖ A childhood memory, good or bad
- ❖ A significant event in your life
- ❖ A story about a parent or grandparent
- ❖ A time you were sick
- ❖ A story of an animal or pet
- ❖ A move you made from one place to another
- ❖ Something you made this year that you liked.
- ❖ How the weather affects your mood
- ❖ A great meal you have had
- ❖ When you had a good time singing

- ❖ What you usually do at home between your evening meal and sleeping
- ❖ What you see out of the window you look out of most
- ❖ Thank someone for something
- ❖ What you are afraid of
- ❖ What you brought with you when you came here and what you left behind
- ❖ A failure
- ❖ Your definition of happiness
- ❖ A proud moment
- ❖ The best way to discipline a child
- ❖ A story about a bicycle
- ❖ A time you got into trouble
- ❖ A movie you really liked
- ❖ How you have been affected by a war
- ❖ Something your parents did for fun
- ❖ A time you couldn't stop laughing
- ❖ Your first experience living away from home
- ❖ Visiting or living on a farm or a ranch
- ❖ An experience riding a horse
- ❖ The most expensive thing you have ever purchased
- ❖ What makes you angry
- ❖ Something difficult you have done
- ❖ Something you regret not doing
- ❖ Something you regret doing
- ❖ What worries you
- ❖ A perfect day
- ❖ Something you know more about than most people
- ❖ Your favorite book
- ❖ Something that has been hard for you about living in the USA
- ❖ What you did with your arms today
- ❖ When you did the right thing, even though it was hard
- ❖ Something you have gone out of your way to learn about
- ❖ The most important thing to teach your children
- ❖ Traditions you want to preserve
- ❖ How your family handled a crisis
- ❖ A job you would like to have
- ❖ Something unusual about your family
- ❖ The things money can't buy
- ❖ Your favorite room in your house
- ❖ Your definition of a good neighbor
- ❖ Advice to newcomers
- ❖ Your favorite time of day, or time of year
- ❖ What you'd like Americans to know about your country
- ❖ Who you speak to in what language and why
- ❖ Something you are optimistic about
- ❖ Something you are pessimistic about

- ❖ The best birthday present you could receive
- ❖ Good advice you have received
- ❖ What questions you would ask animals if you could talk to them
- ❖ What you would do if you saw bugs in your salad
- ❖ Who you would like to meet from history
- ❖ Where in the world you would like to live or visit
- ❖ Your favorite color
- ❖ What event in the Olympics most interests you
- ❖ What you do when you can't fall asleep
- ❖ What kind of trophy you would like to win
- ❖ What animal you would like to be
- ❖ What makes you feel safe
- ❖ Who you talk to when you have a problem
- ❖ Whether you prefer the ocean, the mountains, the forest or the desert
- ❖ Why you left your country
- ❖ How your parent or grandparents met
- ❖ How you met your spouse
- ❖ How you feel about airplanes
- ❖ Your feelings about food
- ❖ How you want to die
- ❖ How you spent your last vacation
- ❖ Being embarrassed by someone else's behavior
- ❖ Something you have learned "the hard way"
- ❖ Something you've tried once that you won't try again
- ❖ Whether you are a day person or a night person
- ❖ Whether you prefer to work with people, data, animals, or machines
- ❖ How you relax
- ❖ Something only a few people know about you
- ❖ How you take care of yourself
- ❖ Organizations you belong to
- ❖ What you think of TV
- ❖ Who you miss
- ❖ Stories you know about working outside
- ❖ What your mother and father did all day
- ❖ A time in your childhood you'd like to experience again
- ❖ A good question for someone to ask you
- ❖ Who you can rely on
- ❖ What you will never forget
- ❖ How you practice English outside of class
- ❖ What gives you energy
- ❖ A high point in your life
- ❖ A low point in your life
- ❖ How you learned to read
- ❖ A memorable teacher
- ❖ Places you have lived

- ❖ **A habit you'd like to break**
- ❖ **Why you want an education**
- ❖ **Your relationship to books**
- ❖ **What you imagine you will be doing 10 years from now**
- ❖ **A proverb from your first language**
- ❖ **Culture shock**
- ❖ **"Time is money" Benjamin Franklin**
- ❖ **A scientific discovery that interests you**
- ❖ **A time you tried to make friends with someone**
- ❖ **The saying, "You can't understand someone until you've walked a mile in their shoes."**
- ❖ **A story about a bicycle**
- ❖ **A kind of art you like**
- ❖ **Something you did that was out of character**
- ❖ **A time when someone held your hand**
- ❖ **A place you often go, besides school and work**
- ❖ **The clothes you like to wear**
- ❖ **Stories you know about working in a factory**

**Other Prompts:** There is a book in the Holman Library reserved for faculty. It's called Think First, Then Write: 101 Writing Topics to Photocopy by Janice G. T. Penner and Heather A. Barnes . If you like the following exercises, check out the book for more ideas. The author is a fan on using lists as a way to brainstorm an idea.

- Put a photo or draw a picture of yourself or someone else you know very well on the top of a page. List 20 words or phrases that describe this person.
- Using English Chart  
Make a chart. Choose a skill (reading, writing, speaking, listening) you want to work on week by week. Think of a realistic and specific plan to practice that skill. At the end of the week, comment on how it worked.

- Celebrating New Years  
First Think: When does your culture celebrate New Year?  
Do you have special activities that only happen at this time?  
What do people do?  
Do you have special clothes or eat special food?

Use these questions to write a description of how New Years is celebrated in your country.

- What it means to be born in \_\_\_\_\_  
What makes your culture unique? What makes your culture part of who you are?  
Write 15 things that explain what it means to be from your culture.
- Childhood Memories  
What was your childhood like? What strong memories do you have, good and bad.  
List 10 things you remember about your childhood.



## Why Poetry?

Somewhere along the way I read that literacy is more than writing a check correctly. I believe this wholeheartedly. Poetry can propel students into a space where they are not sure of the outcome. In this respect, it is a kind a free write. Writing poems builds vocabulary and it encourages students to play with language, which is a way to fluency.

For further thoughts on the rationale, I recommend reading the article Four poets: Modern poetry in the adult literacy classroom by Francis E. Kazemek and Pat Rigg from the Journal of Reading, December 1986. (old, yes, but still relevant.) The authors argue that

Reading and writing poetry opens our students' eyes to what literacy can mean; it helps them see the difference between knowing *how* to read and *wanting* to read to understand themselves and their world better. A second reason for using poetry with adults, and an obvious corollary to the first, is that the material intrinsically motivates reading, writing, and talking with others in and out of class....They are able to observe and explore their own past lives, (and) imagined futures...

Poetry fits beautifully into our writing support classes, at all levels. Poems can be an end to themselves, or as a springboard to a longer piece of writing.

## Poem Activities

This idea was on a handout I picked up at a conference sometime in the last 20 years. The paper had no name on it, and so I am unable to properly credit it.

## Memory Poem

Directions:

Think back to a specific time in your childhood. Where were you? Who were you with? What were you doing?

Include your name.

Include your age.

Include a specific geographic setting.

Keep verbs in the present continuous.

Examples: These are examples I wrote about myself to give them an idea.

Cathy in Detroit

6 years old

Looking for pennies on the sidewalk with Dad

Finding them on the way home

Cathy at 10  
Playing catch with Dad  
Drinking lemonade  
Listening to the Tigers on the radio

Here is a poem from one of my students. I think it is beautiful.

Lola in Mexico  
6 years old  
playing outdoors  
making her own toys  
dolls from a cob  
and dishes from the mud

These poems can serve as a jumping off point for a longer piece of writing about that same memory. They also can just be poems.

### Haiku

For this piece of writing, I introduced the idiom, “to catch one’s breath” or something that “took your breath away.”

I shared a piece of writing from a former student who lived in the U.A.E.

“The only time that I can say I couldn’t catch my breath was when I saw the snow. It happened in Switzerland. I was 17 years old. You can imagine my feeling when I saw it for the first time in my whole life. I acted like a small child (or you can say like a fool). But to say the truth, the sense of the mountains and snow above it was something I’ll never forget for all my life.”

Then I introduced the form of a haiku and we practiced counting syllable in words. I wrote

5 \_\_\_\_\_  
7 \_\_\_\_\_  
5 \_\_\_\_\_

As a class, we created a haiku from the text above.  
This is what they created.

Beautiful mountain  
I never saw snow before  
Took my breath away

Their writing assignment was then to think of a moment that took their breath away. It didn't have to be based in nature, though haiku usually is about nature. I suggested they start with the haiku, and then write the descriptive paragraph, but they could do it the other way round as well. I asked them to type the haiku and the description on the same page, and add a picture. (We met in the lab making this step possible.) We put them on the wall at the end so everyone could read them.

I wrote one to share with them.

Majestic old soul  
Appears slowly from the sea  
Lays her eggs, returns



Once I traveled to Costa Rica. I had the opportunity to visit a turtle sanctuary. This was a place where the eggs of leatherback sea turtles were collected and protected from poachers until they could hatch. I witnessed a leatherback climb out of the sea, dig a hold, lay her eggs, and return to the sea. It took my breath away.

Here is one, minus the picture, written by one of my students.

Mountain, Field, People  
Natural, Simple, Peaceful  
Yunnan, my dream place

I have always wanted to travel to Yunnan, but I have not had this chance yet. I did a lot of research on the internet. Every time I see pictures from there, it takes my breath away. I read many blogs about that place. People live in a natural way. They work in the fields, which is the place between the mountains. Sometimes I think it is a hard life. But people enjoy their life. They sing and dance, and wear colorful clothes. It is a peaceful and beautiful place far away from the city's clamor. It is the place that can make you be a simple, happy person. Oh Yunnan, my dream place. I will visit you soon.

## **Writing with precision**

### **Specific vs. General**

An emphasis on fluency is not incompatible with working on the elements of good writing. By the time we finish this writing exercise, students have a pretty good idea of what I mean by specific language.

The happiness poem-write and fold- idea was from a TESOL 1988 conference presented by Michael Legutke and Howard Thomas.

I shared the following piece of writing by a former student.

#### Some Thoughts on Happiness

Happiness is a necessary ingredient in life. It's building your faith and your behavior on a strong basis. It's doing your duty toward others, and being honest with them. It's having a wonderful family and living together without obstacles. It's using unlimited nice words from a huge dictionary and throwing every bad word away. It's staying with the person you love forever. It's taking a cold bath in horrendously hot weather. It's playing soccer on a cloudy day in Tacoma. It's the thing that doesn't have a price. It's the thing rich people cannot buy with their treasure. It's finding a teacher who appreciates your work in class. It's seeing your family in person, right now, and calling them every day without a phone bill. It's having a cat.

As a class, we examined Abdulla's list and noted which descriptions were specific and which were general. We talked about philosophical and concrete. We talked about what mental images we got from each. We isolated one sentence, for example, "It's playing soccer on a cloudy day in Tacoma." and rewrote it as a general statement—"Happiness is playing sports." Or we took a general statement, "Happiness is having a cat," and imaged a more specific statement, "Happiness is having a cat who sits on your stomach while you are reading the paper." We talked about which sentence had more pop and fizz, and created a clearer image.

Then I divided them into tables of 4 or 5. Each person got a blank sheet of paper. The writing assignment was to think of specific things that made them happy. I encouraged them to use the gerund form of the verb, as they were filling in the idea, happiness is.....They wrote one thing, folded the paper down, and passed it to another student. This went on for many rounds, until the paper was reduced to one sentence thick. Then I collected them all and randomly redistributed them, so each table got a selection. Their next task was to

choose the 5 statement that they, as a group, liked best, and to fashion a "Happiness is" poem from them. These were then written up on the board and discussed.

Further writing opportunities:

Students could create their own happiness is poem. Or take one of their "happiness is" statements and write about it at length. Or write a narrative about a particularly happy day, or time in their life. Or what they define as happiness or how they feel happiness is achieved.

The happiness idea can be modified to Success, Friendship, Love, etc.

### **A Poem to Someone**

This idea was inspired by the Alice Walker poem, "For My Sister Molly Who in the Fifties." It is a complex poem, that would need a lot of scaffolding to understand in its entirety, but there are parts of it that are very straightforward and accessible. The first image, of her sister making a rooster out of the food they were eating, is a good place to start, and may be enough to communicate the poetic idea.

I then share a poem written by a former student called

#### To My Little Brother

Whatever you see, whatever you do  
I like your sound, I like your moves  
I like you whatever you do.  
When you wake up in the morning,  
Wash your face, brush your teeth,  
I like you whatever you do.  
When you went to school,  
I liked your ambitions, every morning, with your nice laugh  
I like you whatever you do.  
My little brother, I wish you will get  
Bigger and bigger, to see your nice future.

The writing assignment is to think of someone you'd like to write a poem to. In that poem, describe what the person has done, and how you feel about it.

## The Alice Walker poem in its entirety:

For My Sister Molly Who in the Fifties

Once made a fairy rooster from  
Mashed potatoes  
Whose eyes I forget  
But green onions were his tail  
And his two legs were carrot sticks  
A tomato slice his crown.  
Who came home on vacation  
When the sun was hot  
And cooked  
And cleaned  
And minded least of all  
The children's questions  
A million or more  
Pouring in on her  
Who had been to school  
And knew (and told us too) that certain  
Words were no longer good  
And taught me not to say us for we  
No matter what "Sonny sayd" up the  
road.

For my sister Molly who in the fifties  
Knew Hamlet well and read into the night  
And coached me in my songs of Africa  
A continent I never knew  
But learned to love  
Because "they" she said could carry  
A tune  
And spoke in accents never heard  
in Eatonton.  
Who read from Prose and Poetry  
And loved to read "Sam McGee from Tennessee"  
On nights the fire was burning low  
And Christmas wrapped in angel hair  
And I for one prayed for snow.

Who in the fifties  
Knew all the written things that made  
Us laugh and stories by  
The hour. Waking up the story buds  
Like fruit. Who walked among the flowers  
And brought them inside the house  
And smelled as good as they  
And looked as bright.  
Who made dresses, braided  
Hair. Moved chairs about  
Hung things from walls  
Ordered baths  
Frowned on wasp bites  
And seemed to know the endings  
Of all the tales  
I had forgot.

Alice Walker

## Cut-Up Poems

I haven't tried this but I intend to. I got the idea from a handout-credited to Leguthe, 1985, Lach-Newinski, Selettky, 1986.

Process:

1. Get a stack of newspapers, magazines and a bunch of scissors.
2. Divide students into pairs or small groups.
3. Students can proceed one of two ways.: either decide on a general idea and look for words, phrases to support the idea, or cut our interesting words, phrases, and then try to combine them into a (surprising) idea.

## Playing Around with Existing Poems

Poets who use simple, concrete language (William Carlos Williams, Langston Hughes, for example) work well for these kinds of exercises. The notion of finding the poetic idea and then taking off with it is from the book Rose, Where Did You get That Red, by Kenneth Koch.

This Is Just To Say

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

William Carlos Williams

Ideas:

1. Give students the poem with key words taken out and placed in a box. Their task is to recreate a version of the poem. Afterwards show them the poet's version.

I have eaten  
the \_\_\_\_\_  
that were in  
the \_\_\_\_\_  
and which  
You were probably  
saving for \_\_\_\_\_  
Forgive me  
they were \_\_\_\_\_  
so \_\_\_\_\_  
and so \_\_\_\_\_

cold, ice box, breakfast, plums, sweet, delicious

For the low level class, the words in the box could have pictures or definitions (delicious = very good to eat. )

2. Give students a collection of all the individual words in the poem and let them construct a version. This kind of activity can help reinforce knowledge of parts of speech, as they could begin this task by organizing the words into nouns, verbs, articles, adjectives, prepositions, etc.

I	saving	for
have	probably	breakfast
eaten	were	forgive
the	you	me
plums	which	they
that	and	were
were	icebox	delicious
in	the	so
sweet	and	so
cold		



3. Give students the poem cut into strips and they have to recreate a version of it.

I have eaten            the plums            that were in  
the icebox            and which            you were probably  
saving            for breakfast            forgive me  
they were delicious    so sweet            and so cold

4. Turn the poem into a dictation where you read the first line and students have to fill in the second line.

I have eaten  
  
that were in  
  
and which  
  
saving  
  
Forgive me  
  
so sweet

This poem has a strong poetic idea which can be a writing prompt: Apologize for something you are secretly not sorry you did.

## Pieces of Advice

This exercise uses F. Scott Fitzgerald's 20 Pieces of Advice to His Daughter on Living

1. Worry about courage.
2. Worry about cleanliness.
3. Worry about efficiency.
4. Worry about horsemanship.
5. Don't worry about popular opinion.
6. Don't worry about dolls.
7. Don't worry about the past.
8. Don't worry about the future.
9. Don't worry about growing up.
10. Don't worry about anyone getting ahead of you.
11. Don't worry about triumph.
12. Don't worry about mosquitoes.
13. Don't worry about flies.
14. Don't worry about insects in general.
15. Don't worry about parents.
16. Don't worry about boys.
17. Don't worry about disappointments.
18. Don't worry about pleasures.
19. Don't worry about satisfactions.
20. Think about: What am I really aiming at?

Ideas:

1. Students choose someone and write 20 pieces of advice to them.
2. Students choose one of the pieces of advice and comment on it. (lends itself to group discussion before writing)
3. Students reflect on the good or bad advice they have received over the course of their lives. Is there a piece of advice they regret not taking, or regret taking?
4. What advice would they give someone planning to move to the USA? (lends itself to group discussion and/or writing)

## Cinquains and Diamond Poems

These are both poems that will reinforce parts of speech.

### Cinquain

I put mine on the board and we deconstruct it. Then students try to create their own. This can be an end in itself, or a springboard to a longer piece of writing.

Inkspot  
Skinny, Flea-bitten  
Scratching, Sleeping, Barking  
Chasing me to school  
Lassie

One noun  
Two adjectives  
Three verbs in the same tense  
A four word description  
Synonym

### Diamond Poem

(This idea from TESOL 88 Michael Legutke and Howard Thomas)

Line 1: Write the name of your subject

Line 2: Write two adjectives about your subject

Line 3: Write three actions (in the -ing form) that you associate with your subject

Line 4: Write four nouns that you associate with your subject

Line 5: Write three -ing verbs that show a change taking place in your subject

Line 6: Write two adjectives that describe this changed subject

Line 7: Write the name of your second subject

### Example

Garden  
vast, green  
blooming, producing, growing  
sunflowers, beans, pumpkins, peas  
dying, shriveling, blowing away  
brown, weedy  
Dirtpile

## Diary of an Inanimate Object

(This idea was inspired by a Roz Chaz cartoon in the New Yorker-diary of a cat, which had the same entry every day, sleep, nap, eat, play with yarn.....)

Here is a diary written by a former student.

Sunday

It was Sunday today. No one paid attention to me. I feel a little bit lonely.

Monday

Many direct mailings and weekly magazines arrived. They were heavy. I was shouting all day, "Please take them out as soon as possible!"

Tuesday

She always looks into me when she comes home from school. I wonder if she is waiting for a letter from someone.

Wednesday

It snowed today. It is hard to stand outside in the cold. Does anyone want to brush the snow from my head?

Thursday

I wish I could walk on my foot. I envy my neighbor's cat.

Friday

Today a different mailman came around. I like him because he is younger and friendlier than the other guy.

Saturday

Today a letter arrived. She looked very happy when she saw it. I want a boyfriend too.

I present the text written by a former student. Students guess what the object is. Their task is to pick an inanimate object and write a 7- day diary. Upon completion, the diaries can be posted and students can guess what the object is.

## More Memory Poems

(This idea is a combination of an idea from one of the Collaborations Books and a handout I picked up along the way without an author citation.)

Instruct the students to think of a specific place from their present or their past. Review the meaning of the sense words, taste, feel, touch, smell, sight, sound. Students write a series of sense memory sentences about that place. I suggested they repeat the name of the place to establish a poetic rhythm. This poem can stand alone or be a springboard to a longer piece of writing.

I provided mine as an example. This is a good exercise for practicing the power of specific, evocative language.

### **In Malanville**

I remember the feel of the handle on the bucket cutting into my palm as I pulled  
water from the well  
in Malanville.

I remember the feel of the water I poured on myself in order to sleep in the stifling  
nighttime heat  
in Malanville.

I remember the taste of the Fulani cheese in the rice and beans from the night vendor  
in Malanville.

I remember standing in a field in total darkness without a flashlight, or even the  
moon, reluctant to take a step  
in Malanville.

I remember the feel of being pressed into the backseat of a car with 8 people, baskets  
of chickens, and a few goats  
in Malanville.

I remember the taste of the warm Co-Co Cola from Honore's buvette every day after  
school  
in Malanville.

Here is a memory poem written by one of my students.

### In Morelos

I remember the taste of the delicious mangos that I ate at my Grandma's plantation  
in Morelos.

I remember the sound of the waterfall falling and feeling the breeze on my face  
in Morelos.

I remember the smell of the vegetable soup that my mom made when I was in elementary  
school  
in Morelos.

I remember standing in that field, where my uncles were planting corn and beans on a very  
sunny day  
in Morelos.

### Non-rhyming pattern poem

(This idea is from TESOL 2007, and a handout from Beth at  
[writewhatyouknowtesol@yahoo.com](mailto:writewhatyouknowtesol@yahoo.com))

This exercise is a good one to practice parts of speech. The presenter also emphasized the traits of good writing that we practice by writing poetry: idea and content, significant subject matter, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions.

The non-rhyming pattern poem criteria

- Use present tense
- Use each word only once
- Title and sign your poem
- Capitalize first word of each line
- Commas as needed
- Avoid over-used words

Format:

Title

Adjective, adjective, noun

Verb, adverb

Adjective, noun, adjective, noun

Adverb, noun, verb

The presenter emphasized that the pattern is just to get students started. The communication is what is important.

I shared my poem as an example.

Dozer  
Dead, wonderful dog  
Visits unexpectedly  
Dreamy companion, happy dancer  
Sweetly welcomes Charlie  
(I changed the order of the last line)

### Using Poetry as a Writing Prompt

Depending on the poem, and the level of the students, poetry can also be used as a direct prompt for a piece of writing. I've included several here, but of course, the list of possible poems to use is endless. If you happen across something that worked really well, please share the idea!

Here is one that has inspired some good writing. It might be useful to have students try and add the periods—that is- identify complete phrases. Or you could try acting it out. It is very visual. The main thing is to find the poetic idea.

Who is the “we” in line 3?

Where are they?

What are they doing? What is the game?

What do the children do in this game?

How does the father react?

What is the father thinking about?

Writing Topics:

Describe a game you liked to play as a child.

What kind of pain have you caused your parents?

What kind of pain have your children caused you?

How do children step on their parents' heads?

How has your relationship with your parents or your children changed over the years?

What do you think the author means in the last stanza when he wonders if he will have enough love when it's not just a game?



## Step On His Head

Let's step on daddy's head shout  
the children my dear children as  
we walk in the country on a sunny

summer day my shadow bobs dark on  
the road as we walk and they jump  
on its head and my love of them

fills me all full of soft feelings  
now I duck with my head so they'll  
miss when they jump they screech

with delight and I moan oh you're  
hurting you're hurting me stop and  
they jump all the harder and love

fills the whole road but I see it run  
on through the years and I know  
how some day they must jump when

it won't be this shadow but really  
my head (as I stepped on my own  
father's head) it will hurt really

hurt and I wonder if then I will  
have love enough will I have love  
enough when it's not just a game?

James Laughlin

## Dust of Snow

The way a crow  
Shook down on me  
The dust of snow  
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart  
A change of mood  
And saved some part  
Of a day I had rued.

Robert Frost

Poetic idea: An encounter with nature changing your feeling.

## Two Tramps in Mud Time (an excerpt)

The sun was warm but the wind was chill  
You know how it is with an April day  
When the sun is out and the wind is still  
You're one month on in the middle of May  
But if you so much as dare to speak,  
A cloud comes over the sunlit arch  
A wind comes off a frozen peak,  
And you're two months back in the middle of March.

Robert Frost

Make sure you read this aloud!

Poetic Idea: Your relationship to the weather, specifically spring.

## Soup

I saw a famous man eating soup.  
I say he was lifting a fat broth  
Into his mouth with a spoon.  
His name was in the newspapers that day  
Spelled out in tall black headlines  
And thousands of people were talking about him.

When I saw him,  
He sat bending his head over a plate  
Putting soup in his mouth with a spoon.

Carl Sandburg

Poetic idea: The common essence of humanity, the price of fame.

## A Minor Bird

I have wished a bird would fly away.  
And not sing by my house all day:

Have clapped my hands at him from the door  
When it seemed as if I could bear no more.

The fault must partly have been in me.  
The bird was not to blame for his key.

And of course there must be something wrong  
In wanting to silence any song.

Robert Frost

Poetic idea: Misplaced unhappiness.  
You might point out the rhyming couplets, which combine to express a complete thought.

I, too, am America

I, too, sing America  
I am the darker brother  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
when company comes  
but I laugh  
and eat well  
and grow strong.  
They don't care  
how I feel,  
they don't know  
what I think.  
Tomorrow

I'll sit at the table  
when company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
say to me  
"Eat in the kitchen"  
then.  
Besides, they'll see how beautiful I am  
and be ashamed.  
I, too, am America.

Langston Hughes

Dreams  
Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams  
For when dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Frozen with snow.

Let others cheer the winning man,  
There's one I hold worthwhile.  
'Tis he who does the best he can,  
Then loses with a smile.

Beaten he is, but not to stay  
Down with the rank and file;  
That man will win another day,  
Who loses with a smile.

Langston Hughes

The Langston Hughes poems both speak to outsiders, to prejudice, to the importance of grace, to tenacity. All these are subjects which resonate with our students.

To a Poor Old Woman

Munching a plum on  
The street a paper bag  
Of them in her hand

They taste good to her  
They taste good  
To her. They taste  
Good to her

You can see it by  
The way she gives herself  
To the one half  
Sucked out in her hand

Comforted  
A solace of ripe plums  
Seeming to fill the air  
They taste good to her

William Carlos Williams

Poetic idea: A focus on sensations and the comfort and pleasure a small item can bring.

## Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village, though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

Robert Frost

### Writing Prompts:

Why would a person stop in the woods to see it fill up with snow?

Have you ever stopped to watch or look at something for no particular reason?

Have you ever been outside in heavy snow? How did it make you feel?

Describe a place you like to go to be quiet and alone.

What do you think the last stanza is referring to?

## Bibliography

Elbow, Peter. Writing With Power. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Elbow, Peter. Writing Without Teachers. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Elbow, Peter, and Pat Belanoff. A Community of Writers A Workshop Course in Writing. New York: Random House, 1989.

Frank, Marjorie. If You're Trying to Teach Kids to Write, You've Gotta Have This Book! Nashville, TN: Incentive Publications, Inc., 1995.

Kazemek, Frances and Pat Rigg. Enriching Our Lives: Poetry Lessons for Adult Literacy Teachers ISBN 0-87207-137-5.

Koch, Kenneth Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? Teaching Great Poetry to Children. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

Koch, Kenneth, Wishes, Dreams, and Lies. Teaching Children to Write Poetry. New York: Vintage Books, 1970.

MacLachlan, Patricia . What You Know First. Joanna Cotler Books, an imprint of Harpercollins Publishers, 1995.

Maley, Alan and Alan Duff. The Inward Ear Poetry in the Language Classroom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Maley, Alan and Sandra Moulding. Poem into Poem. Reading and Writing Poetry with Students of English. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Marcus, Arlene. Writing Inspirations. Vermont: Pro Lingua Associates, 1996.

Martin, Rachel. Listening Up: Reinventing Ourselves as Teachers and Students. New Hampshire: Boyton/Cook Publishers, 2001.

McCormick Calkins, Lucy. The Art of Teaching Writing. New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc, 1986.

Penner, Janice G. T. and Heather A. Barnes. Think First, Then Write: 101 Writing Topics to Photocopy. Vancouver, BC: AACE, AA About Communicating in English, 2005.



Raimes, Ann. Techniques in Teaching Writing. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Shaughnessy, Mina P. Errors & Expectations A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Many of the writing topics came from old issues of Co-Evolution Quarterly.

TESOL Quarterly vol. 16, #4 has lots of ideas about using poetry.

I developed the following worksheets to use in the writing support class. I add the colors to the key before I pass it out. I post the Editing Checklist and give everyone a copy. I give everyone a copy of the page on formatting. (It is just my preference of how I want to the paper to look. The main things I'm after are margins on both sides and holes on the left.) The Story Outline may be useful if students are at the point where they are writing full-fledged narratives. I have found that it is very helpful after the fact, as a tool for revision. By tweaking it slightly it can refer to something already written.

## ***KEY TO COLOR CODED CORRECTIONS***

### **PUNCTUATION**

Capital letters, periods, commas {missing or unnecessary}

Ex: it is Monday

### **VOCABULARY**

Word form: correct family, wrong part of speech

Ex: The movie was excited.

### **VOCABULARY**

Word choice: try a different word

Ex: I went at the store.  
My sister very loves to garden.

### **VERBS**

Tense, conjugation, or verb missing

Ex: Yesterday I wake up early.  
He ask a question.  
It sunny today.

### **PLURALS**

Missing or unnecessary

Ex: My parents had four child.  
I have a dogs.

### **WORD MISSING**

Ex: We drove the store.

### **SPELLING**

Ex: I have two dauhtgers.

## EDITING CHECKLIST

- My sentences begin with capital letters.
- My sentences end with periods or question marks.
- Every sentence has a subject.
- Every sentence has a verb.
- The subject and the verb agree. (*Example: I live, He lives*)
- The verbs tenses are consistent.
- My past tense verbs end in “ed” or are irregular.
- Modals are followed by the simple form of a verb.
- The plural nouns end in “s” or are irregular.

When you write or type a story, please format it like this.

Story# \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Title

Each word in a title starts with a capital letter.

Do not use a period after the title.

Indent 5 spaces at the beginning of each paragraph. Use a space after a sentence. Double space your lines. Use at least a 12 point font if you are typing. Leave margins on each side of your paper. If you are writing by hand, the holes in the paper go on the left side.

# Story Outline

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**TOPIC:** \_\_\_\_\_

*This is your general subject. Choose from the list or think of your own.*

**TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Titles are usually short.*

**CONTROLLING IDEA: This is the main point you are making about your topic.**

Use this space to write down some of the points you want to make, along with some details.  
Think WHO/WHAT/WHERE/WHY/HOW

---

*Point*

*Details*

*Point*

*Details*

*Point*

*Details*

What **tense** will you write in? \_\_\_\_\_

*Remember to check your verbs.*

**ORGANIZATION:** When you construct your story, think of a sandwich.

Introduction

Main Filling with Details

Conclusion