

Writing Foundations: Setting the Stage for Excellence

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Topics

- Teaching Skills and Strategies
- Writing Foundations
 - Handwriting
 - Letter Formation
 - Handwriting Fluency
 - Spelling
 - Spelling - Regular Words
 - Spelling - Irregular Words
 - Spelling rules
 - Sentences
 - Sentence Expansion
 - Sentence Combining
 - Punctuation and Capitalization Rules

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Teaching Skills and Strategies

- Emerging writers need:
 - Explicit instruction on writing skills and strategies
 - Opportunities to respond in lessons
 - Positive, corrective feedback on performance

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Teaching Skills and Strategies

- Model I do it.
- Prompt We do it.
- Check You do it.

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Teaching Skills and Strategies

- Model (**I do it.**) “*My turn.*”
 - **Show**
 - Proceed step-by-step.
 - Exaggerate the steps.
 - **Tell**
 - Tell students what you are doing.
 - Tell students what you are thinking.
 - **Gain Responses**
 - Ask for responses.

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Teaching Skills and Strategies

- Prompt. **We do it.** (“Let’s _____ together.”)
 - Prompt by performing the behavior at the **same time** as your students.
 - Prompt **physically**.
 - Prompt **verbally**.
 - Guide students through the strategy.
 - Step - do - Step - do - Step - do - Step - do
 - Gradually fade your prompt.

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Teaching Skills and Strategies

- Check. **You do it.** (“Your turn.”)
- **Check for understanding.**
- Verify students’ understanding before independent work is given.
- Carefully monitor students’ responses.

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Writing Foundations - Handwriting - Importance

- “Children who experience difficulty mastering this skill may **avoid writing** and develop a **mindset that they cannot write**, leading to arrested writing development.” (Graham, Harris, & Fink, 2000)
- If students have to struggle to remember letter forms, their ability to express themselves suffers. Handwriting must be **automatic**. (Graham, 2007)

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Writing Foundations - Handwriting - Importance

- Fluent, accurate letter formation and spelling are associated with students' production of **longer and better-organized compositions**. (Berninger, Vaughan, Abbott, Abbott, Brooks, Rogan, Reed, & Graham, S., 1997)
- Measures of **handwriting speed** among elementary students are **good predictors** of quality and quantity of written products in middle school. (Peverly, 2007)
- **Students benefit from explicit instruction on how to form and fluently write letters of alphabet.**

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Writing Foundations - Handwriting - Letter Formations (See Example 1)

Introduction of letter form

I do it.

- Model the letter formation.
- Stress orientation to the lines.
(*Hair line. Belt line. Foot line.*)
- Model letter formation a number of times. Use verbal prompts.

Watch me make a lower case p. I start at the belt line. Touch down. Touch around. Watch again. Touch down. Touch around. Say it as I write a lower case p. Touch down. Touch around.

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Writing Foundations - Handwriting - Letter Formations (See

Example 1)

We do it.

- Guide students in forming the letter using verbal prompts.
(*“Touch down. Touch around.”*)
- Monitor the students letter formation.

You do it.

- Have students continue writing the letter as they say the prompt OR the letter sound.
- Continue until the letters are consistently formed correctly.

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Writing Foundations - Handwriting - Letter Formations (See

Example 1)

- Carefully monitor handwriting practice.
- Provide feedback.
 - Teacher feedback.
 - *This is your best letter p. It starts at the beltline and goes straight down and then around.*
 - Self-evaluation.
 - Model the process.
 - *Watch me examine my letters. (Circle your best p.) This is my best p. It starts at the beltline, goes straight down and goes around.*
 - Have students evaluate their work and circle their best formed letters.

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Writing Foundations - Handwriting - Letter Formations

After mass practice to obtain accuracy, provide on-going practice that is distributive and cumulative.

- Dictate sounds. Have students write letters on slates (with permanent lines) or paper.
- Provide review worksheets with recently taught letters PLUS review letters.

**Remember:
Mastery plus review = retention**

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Writing Foundations - Handwriting - Fluency

■ Handwriting fluency can be increased by

- Having students write frequently.
- Involving students in “repeated writings”.

(Graham, Harris, & Fink, 2000)

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Writing Foundations - Handwriting - Fluency (See Example 2)

- Repeated Writing
 - Student writes the same paragraph or material on consecutive days.
 - Materials - Paragraph in reader.
 - Adages, proverbs, sayings
 - Tries to increase the number of letters or words written in a 2 to 5 minute session.
 - Student graphs number of letters or words written.

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Writing Foundations - Handwriting (See Example 3)

- Stress appearance of work
- Appearance DOES make a difference in terms of grades received and response of teachers and others.
- Teach “How should your paper look?”

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Writing Foundations - Spelling - Importance

- Strong relationship between **spelling and writing**.
- Learning to read and spell rely on much of the **same underlying knowledge** (letter-sounds, affixes, etc.)
(Moats, 2007)
- Spelling instruction can be designed to help children better understand key knowledge resulting in **better reading**. (Ehri, 2000)

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Writing Foundations - Spelling - Importance

- Writers who must think too hard about how to spell use valuable cognitive resources needed for higher level aspects of composition. (Singer & Bashir, 2004)
- 80% of employment applications doomed if poorly written.
- 15 to 20 minutes a day

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Writing Foundations - Spelling - Regular Words

Regular Words

- 400,000 words in dictionary
- Only 13% are truly irregular (memorize)
- Focus spelling instruction on patterns that generalize

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Writing Foundations - Spelling - Regular Words

- Letter-sound associations
- Single syllable patterns (e.g., cvc, ccvc, cvcc, cvvc, cvce)
- Multisyllabic words
 - Inflectional endings
 - Prefixes, suffixes, common roots
- Rules for combining forms

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Writing Foundations - Spelling - Regular Words

- Spelling - Regular Words
- Selection of words
 - Words that will be used in writing.
 - **Words taught in decoding strand of reading program.**
 - Words taught in spelling program.

Caution - The word lists are the strength of most spelling programs. Many of the practice exercises in spelling books have debatable value.

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Writing Foundations - Spelling

Video and Example 4

- Good practices noted in video

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Writing Foundations - Spelling

- Alternatives to traditional spelling worksheets
 - Teacher dictation of words (See example 4a)
 - Partner dictation of words (See example 4b)

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Writing Foundations - Spelling Rules Example 5 and 6

Introduce high frequency rules (See Example 5)
Teach rules explicitly.

1. Introduce rule.
2. Illustrate rule with examples and non-examples. (***I do it.***)
3. Guide students in applying the rule to examples and non-examples. (***We do it.***)
4. Check understanding using examples and non-examples. (***You do it.***)

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Writing Foundations - Spelling - Irregular Words Example 7

- Irregular words
 - Teach 3 to 5 per week
 - Focus on the most common (Moats, 2003)

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Writing Foundations - Spelling - Irregular Words

- Teach students a strategy for independently studying irregular words.
- Copy, Cover, Write, Check

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Writing Foundations - Spelling - Independent Writing

- Teach students how to attack the spelling of unknown words when writing. See Example 8.
- When monitoring students as they write, give feedback on spelling words visually (e.g., Write the word down for the student.)

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Writing Foundations - Sentences Example 9

Sentence Expansion Activities

- Students can learn the structure of sentences and gain “sentence sense” through sentence expansion exercises.
- Students add words or phrases to sentences that answer questions such as when, where, why, and how.

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Writing Foundations - Sentences

Sentence-Combining Activities

- Recommended in *Writing Next*
(Graham & Perin, 2007)
- Have positive effect on students' writing.
(Evans, Venotuzzi, Bundrick, & McWilliams, 1988; Howie, 1979;
Kanellas, Carifio & Dagostino, 1998; Pedersen, 1977; Saddler &
Graham, 2005; Stoddard, 1982)

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Writing Foundations - Sentences

Example 10

Sentence-Combining Activities

(Rewards Writing - Sentence Refinement published by Sopris)

- Students start with a stem sentence and combine it with one to four other sentences.
- Turn to Example 10. *Try out the following items with your partner.*

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Writing Foundations - Sentences Example 11

Primary Sequence

1. Join two or more subjects
2. Join two or more verbs
3. Join two or more predicate adjectives
4. Join two or more direct objects
5. Join two or more adjectives

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Writing Foundations Punctuation and Capitalization Rules

Example 12

- When teaching punctuation and capitalization rules, follow the instructional format for rules.
1. Introduce rule.
 2. Illustrate rule with examples and non-examples. (***I do it.***)
 3. Guide students in applying the rule to examples and non-examples. (***We do it.***)
 4. Check understanding using examples and non-examples. (***You do it.***)

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