Children’s Program Tutor Tricks

# Writing

**Why Write?**

Students who have repeatedly experienced difficulty in writing may become apathetic, anxious or even negative when faced with these tasks. Students need occasions to write about what they know on topics of interest. They need to engage in writing that is not just for the teacher.

Talk with your student about reasons why we write. Writing helps you remember and learn. It helps you make up stories and share your feelings. And writing is fun to do, which makes it a really good thing! Share reasons why you write, even share examples of your writing. Ask your students why they like to write. Find out what makes them excited! Writing silly poems? Writing letters, writing notes, writing gross stories? All these can be fun!

**Student Struggles**

**Coming up with Ideas**

Have your student create a list and attach it to the inside cover of their writing journal that consists of topics that they want to write about or whom they want to write to. On days when they are struggling, have the student choose a topic from their own list.

Discuss the expected amount of writing time together.  Then both write about the chosen topic for the agreed upon amount of time, five to ten minutes is plenty.  Then share your writing with each other.  Plan to use next session to review the entry, edit any errors and add more details.

**Spelling**

Some students get so wrapped up in spelling the words correctly the first time, they forget about content and can struggle with finishing just one sentence. It is important to have a safe risk-taking environment. Let your student know that every word doesn't need to be spelled correctly.  Students may want to write words that are above their spelling level, encourage the use of vivid words and support with spelling if necessary.

The writing journal should be a place of ideas. Remind your student that what’s more important than spelling is communication. Have fun conversations about spelling. Many students, even adults, use “inventive” spelling. This label can help students feel more secure about trying to spell words they don’t know. Cat, Kat, Cet. All of these are ok to have in a journal. It gets their ideas across and allows them to spend more time thinking about content and less time thinking about spelling.

**A Million Ideas or Feeling Overwhelmed**

Utilize think-alouds. Have your student think out loud about what they want to say and model ways for them to organize it on the white board or in their journals. After a few sessions of modeling a brainstorm have your student try it by themselves. Show them that planning makes the writing process that much easier.

**Please note** that we have many graphic organizers that can help students brainstorm and organize their thoughts.

**Tutor Struggles**

**What is good writing?**

Good writing consists of ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions and presentation.

**Ideas**

Having a list of interesting ideas in your journal will help your struggling student beat the idea block that can happen when you say “what would you like to write about?” Use word webs or other graphic organizers to help develop their ideas so that they are clear and easy to understand.

**Organization**

Help your student write enticing leads, work on transitions and sequencing and writing dynamic conclusions.

**Voice**

Work with your student on writing for a particular audience and experiment with their voice. Students can practice using a narrative voice, expository voice, descriptive voice or persuasive voice.

**Word Choice**

Encourage your student to use descriptive verbs, adjectives and similes. Have them write using sounds or idioms. Have students keep a word list in their journal. When they read a descriptive word or phrase they really like they can add it to their list to use in their own writing.

**Sentence Fluency**

Help your student write with rhythm by varying the sentence length. Use alliteration. Encourage them to read their writing out loud to hear if it sounds “right.”

**Conventions**

When getting ready to write a final draft help your student edit for spelling and punctuation. Make sure they are using paragraphs and capitalizing properly. Edit for simple and complex sentences and make sure that quotations are used correctly.

**Presentation**

Finally, work with them on the presentation of their final draft. The audience and the content will determine what the final copy should look like. Can they enhance the work with charts, graphs or pictures? Have they checked that the page layout is appropriate for the submission guidelines? Is it written or typed? Are the margins correct? Is their name on the top of the page? The proper presentation will make sure that all their hard work is recognized.

**Motivation**

Make sure your student has a choice in what they write. They should pick a topic that interests them. Please feel free to break up the writing prompt throughout your session. Perhaps you brainstorm an idea, read for awhile and revisit the writing at the end of the session.

Try writing alongside your student.  While your student is writing spend time writing as well.  Seeing you write, cross words out, stop and think, and continue writing is valuable in helping your student see the writing process in action.

Remind your student that writing is a process. No one writes a perfect story or article the first time they sit down. If they understand that it doesn’t have to be perfect the first time, they may be more motivated to try working on it.

**Have Fun!!!**