

INTRODUCTION

Being able to communicate meaningfully through writing is an essential life skill. As students progress through school, written assignments become more frequent and more complex. Job positions commonly require a significant amount of formal or technical writing. For these reasons, it is vital that each student receive a solid foundation in writing instruction.

Once labeled in importance as the second “R,” writing has often been less emphasized than reading and math, and even science and social studies. While these other school subjects were easily broken down into specific skills with activities that could be objectively graded, writing skills were much more abstract, difficult to grade, and seemingly hard to teach. Recent increased expectations and mandatory testing have renewed an interest in teaching writing. Writing instruction is reemerging with an emphasis in writing across all curriculum areas.

The *Basic Writing Series* is designed for the educator who desires a coherent method of teaching writing. Each activity is presented at a low readability level to support beginning readers and writers. The techniques modeled within this program teach specific repetitive steps and reinforce learned skills with additional practice time. The *Basic Writing Series* employs clear instruction, visual cues, repetition, and activities within each learning modality.

RATIONALE

The philosophy behind the development of the *Basic Writing Series* is that writing instruction can, and should, be taught to every learner. This curriculum, through its use of the Think, Organize, Write method, has separated writing instruction into small, specific skills and combined those skills with activities that can be evaluated.

Writing skills can be separated into manageable pieces of instruction and can be compared to building construction. Buildings are constructed vertically and involve the successful completion of several phases: a strong foundation, a framing support system, walls, and eventually, multiple stories. Each step must be completed successfully before the next phase begins.

The construction and process of writing a paragraph also has phases, beginning with a foundation that consists of a readily available bank of words. Provided with repeated experiences in writing words, students are better equipped to select words for specific topics and write clear sentences. Connecting these words into simple sentences provides the writer a primitive framing support system. To transform the simple sentence into a more complex one, special tools and supplies are used to reinforce the existing structure. To create a topic sentence, the addition of a main idea is necessary. Details give support to the main idea through supporting sentences. Finally, thoughtfully constructed sentences can be stacked to build a paragraph. *Basic Writing Series 1* addressed each of these basic paragraph-building phases.

A simple paragraph, like one story of a building, must be constructed so that it can stand alone and be connected to the paragraphs that follow it. In *Basic Writing Series 2*, the student is introduced to writing two paragraphs. Six units are filled with writing activities to assist the student in becoming a more fluent writer. The units are ordered in developmental progression and are compatible with the writing process.

UNIT OVERVIEW

Each unit in this book contains teacher instructions and activity pages. Units 2–6 also include a parent/guardian letter to send home. Additional components included in each unit are listed below.

Unit 1: Idea Inventory

Prompts to guide students in developing their own topics

Unit 2: One Paragraph Review

One-paragraph graphic organizers

Unit 3: Writing Two Paragraphs

Directions and topics for a “Naming Details” dice game
Identifying main ideas and writing detail sentences

Unit 4: Editing Paragraphs

Editing exercises for small groups

Unit 5: Enhancing Paragraphs

Refining writing skills

Unit 6: Putting it All Together

Using skills introduced in Units 1–5 to write two paragraphs

Mall Shopping
Name: _____ Date: _____
Directions: Look at the picture carefully. Choose one object to focus on, and circle it. Think about the object, and then write as many related ideas as possible on the lines below.

Finish the Paragraph 3
Name: _____ Date: _____
Directions: Look at the picture. Read the words in the graphic organizer. Use the information to finish writing the paragraph. Write one sentence for each detail.

ice cream
toppings
chocolate syrup
sprinkles

Ice cream tastes great when you
add toppings.

Complete the Paragraphs 1
Name: _____ Date: _____
Directions: Read the words in the word bank. Use the words and phrases to complete the graphic organizer below. Write the main ideas in the rectangles and the details in the triangles.

Word Bank:
elephant from Africa lion koala from Australia kangaroo

End Punctuation Marks
Name: _____ Date: _____
Directions: Read the sentences. Look for a period (.) or question mark (?) at the end of each sentence. Add the correct end punctuation mark to each sentence that needs one. The first one has been done for you.

- There are three goldfish in the aquarium.
- Mario went shopping with his mom on Saturday.
- My dad said we can go camping this weekend.
- Does this sentence need a question mark?
- Have you ever seen a hockey game?
- Gene told us about his summer adventures.

On Your Own 2
Name: _____ Date: _____
Directions: Put page 136 beside this page. Use the information in the graphic organizer to write two paragraphs. Remember to use words that clearly express your ideas.

Favorite Hobbies
Name: _____ Date: _____
Directions: Put page 111 beside this one. Write two paragraphs about hobbies. Remember to end each sentence with a period or question mark. Then, use the checklist below to check your work.

Student Writing Checklist Directions:
Read the paragraphs out loud slowly, touching each word as you read it. Then, complete the checklist.

My written words match the words I read out loud, exactly.
 Each sentence begins with a capital letter.
 Each sentence ends with a period or question mark.
 Capital letters are used only where needed.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Basic Writing Series 2 contains activities designed to motivate students to develop their language and writing skills as well as many tools to assist the teacher. Unit components are described below.

Teacher Instructions: The teacher instructions are found at the beginning of each unit. These instructions include a list of student objectives, an overview of the unit, and motivational activities to engage students in writing. The student objectives identify the skills covered within the unit. The unit overview provides a quick summation of the student activities. The Getting Students Motivated section includes activities that employ a variety of learning styles to assist the teacher in lesson preparation and provide ideas to make writing fun.

Parent/Guardian Letter: Units 2–6 include a letter that may be sent home with every student at the beginning of the unit. The parent/guardian letter explains the current writing skills being taught and suggests activities that help reinforce the new skills. Home activities are designed to provide additional practice of the skills taught in prior units.

Activity Sheets: Each unit includes several activity sheets with clear and simple instructions that employ a variety of learning styles to ensure students' mastery of the skills. Each activity page represents one writing lesson meant to stand alone. Activity sheets can be used individually, with a partner, or in small groups. If students work with partners or in small groups, each member should bring his or her activity page to the group. The student activity sheets can be completed in class or sent home for additional practice, review, or homework.

BLACKLINE MASTERS

Blackline masters have been included for teachers who wish to provide students with additional writing, editing, and revising experience. The Think, Organize, Write graphic organizer from *Basic Writing Series 1* has been expanded to include the organization of two-paragraph writing introduced in this book. Use pages XVIII–XX to give students additional writing practice in other curriculum areas.

ONE PARAGRAPH REVIEW

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Objectives:
Students will review the components of a paragraph.
Students will use a graphic organizer to organize their writing ideas.
Students will write three sentence paragraphs.

Overview:
In this unit, students will review the skills presented in *Basic Writing Series 1*. First, the students will be experimentally introduced to the parts of a paragraph through lessons. Then, the students will combine these skills to write three sentence paragraphs. The familiar graphic organizer of the Think, Organize, Write method is used, and its single geometric shapes are incorporated throughout the unit as visual cues to prompt students before writing.

Getting Students Motivated:

1. Laminate pages 24–28 and cut out the geometric shapes. Separate the pieces into plastic bags, one bag for each shape. Allow the students to select a bag and arrange the components into a graphic organizer.
2. Provide magazines and art paper. Direct the students to glue a magazine picture near the top of the art paper. Have them draw and color the magazine picture outside of the topic of a graphic organizer. Give the students time to draw the rest of the graphic organizer and fill in words for each component. Let them write a paragraph to their organizer on writing paper, and then glue the paragraph onto the art paper below the organizer.
3. Play "Name It!" Read a topic sentence to the class, request the students to listen for the topic and main idea. Call on volunteers to read the topic and main idea. If the students struggle at first, read the responses to give them the answers. Repeat the topic sentence and emphasize the important parts.

Parent/Guardian Letter:
A parent/guardian letter that explains the purpose of the unit, identifies skills that will be taught, and suggests some learning activities is included at page 22. Send this letter home with students at the beginning of the unit so that families can help reinforce writing skills taught in school.

Activity Sheets:
Several activity sheets are included on pages 27–48. Students can complete these activities individually, with partners, or in small groups.

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

We are beginning a unit on writing three-sentence paragraphs. The paragraphs will contain a topic sentence and two detail sentences. Be sure to ask your child questions about what he or she writes at school each day.

Suggested Activities:

1. Practice forming topic sentences with your child. Ask him or her to select an object in the room (e.g., a house plant). Then, provide your child with a main idea, or something you want to say about the plant (e.g., needs water). Allow him or her to combine the topic and main idea to form a topic sentence (e.g., a plant needs water).
2. Play "Name the Details!" To play the game, one person must state a main idea. Then, the second player answers by naming two details that support the main idea (e.g., carrots, which to eat for lunch/dinner/breakfast and bananas, favorite game/track and baseball, recent friends/family and Sam's. Reverse roles frequently).

To extend and reinforce our writing lessons, I will be sending activity sheets home for your child to complete. Review these activities with your child, and praise your child's writing efforts. Please return the completed activity sheets to school.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with your child.


Sincerely,


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Name: _____ Date: _____

Write the Main Idea 1

Directions:
Look at each picture.
Think of the main idea.
Write the main idea in the rectangle below the picture.





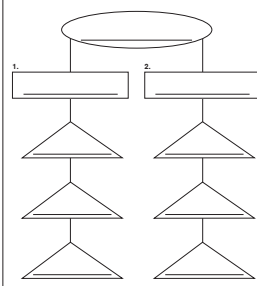


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Name: _____ Date: _____

Writer's Choice B

Directions:
Put page _____ next to this page.
Write the main ideas from page _____ on this page.
Use the remaining words from the list to complete the graphic organizer.



1. _____

2. _____

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ASSESSMENTS

Two types of assessment are included in this book: a progress chart and a rubric chart. Neither of these assessments requires marking on the students' work.

Progress Chart: A progress chart (page XIII) is included to track students' progress and mastery of writing skills. One way to use the progress chart is to collect weekly writing samples from each student and quickly check the boxes on the chart to record each of the skills the student has used on the sample. Once the student has used the same skill in five successive progress checks, the teacher may mark the skill as mastered. The progress chart is a valuable communication tool to inform parents/guardians of their child's success and keep a record of their strengths and areas needing additional practice.

Rubric Chart: A rubric chart (page XIV) is included in this book to numerically grade students' writing. While grading a student writing sample, refer to the scoring key to assign each skill a numerical rating of 0–3. To find the final score, add up the ratings and use the scoring scale provided to equate the total score to a grade, if desired.

Student Writing Checklists: Student Writing Checklists are included on pages XV–XVII. These checklists present proofing skills in conjunction with the writing skills introduced in Units 4, 5, and 6. The Student Writing Checklists are most effective when students use them several days after writing a piece. The waiting period allows students to be more objective about their own writing.

The Progress Chart form includes a header for Name and Evaluated By, followed by a grid with columns for dates and rows for various writing skills. A 'PROGRESS CHART' label is in the top right corner.

The Rubric Chart form includes a header for Name and Evaluated By, followed by a grid for rating skills. Below the grid is a 'Scoring Scale' section with instructions: 'Adjust score if fewer than 10 skills are evaluated. Add up the total rubric score, and use the Scoring Scale to obtain a numerical grade.' The scale shows ranges for scores 50-100, 40-50, 30-40, and 0-30, corresponding to letter grades A, B, C, and D.

The Student Writing Checklist: Unit 4 form includes a header for Name and Date, followed by 'Directions' and a list of proofing skills with checkboxes. The skills listed are: 'My written words match the words I read out loud, exactly.', 'Each sentence begins with a capital letter.', 'Each sentence ends with a period or question mark.', and 'Capital letters are used only where needed.' The form is labeled 'STUDENT WRITING CHECKLIST' and 'Unit 4'.

EXPLANATION OF THE THINK, ORGANIZE, WRITE METHOD

The heart of the curriculum is the Think, Organize, Write method. This method was introduced in its most rudimentary form in *Basic Writing Series 1*. It has been expanded in this book to assist students in further developing fundamental writing skills.

Think, Organize, Write is a method of dividing writing skills into smaller, more manageable skills that can be evaluated. The first two steps, Think and Organize, engage students in prewriting activities. Mature writers naturally take time to think and organize their thoughts in a coherent fashion before writing. Novice writers, however, must be taught to do this. The Think, Organize, Write graphic organizer, using the simple geometric shapes of an oval, rectangle, and triangle, provides a way to easily develop prewriting skills. The graphic organizer visually displays each writing step and becomes so familiar to students that its recognizable geometric shapes are used as visual cues to prompt writing. The final step, Write, uses the geometric shapes to guide emerging writers in the writing of entire paragraphs.

In *Basic Writing Series 2*, each of the skills supporting the Think, Organize, Write method is incrementally matured. Skills introduced or expanded upon include the following:

Think

- Development of original topics
- Generation of two main ideas and topic sentences
- Inclusion of four to six supporting details

Organize

- Expansion of the graphic organizer to accommodate the information needed to write two paragraphs

Write

- Basic editing skills
- Revision skills of word choice and sentence elaboration
- Development of two topic sentences and two-paragraph writing skills