

## 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 for 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 instructions, 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 the construction of buildings. 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 begins with a foundation that consists of a readily available bank of words. With repeated experiences in writing words, students are better equipped to select the best words for specific topics and write clear sentences. Connecting these words into simple sentences provides the writer a strong 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 which follow it. *Basic Writing Series 2* introduced the student to writing two paragraphs linked by a common topic.

Writing, like buildings, can have different facades. *Basic Writing Series 3* expands the students' knowledge of paragraph writing to include three types of writing: descriptive, "how-to," and narrative. As students practice writing for different reasons, their own personal writing voice develops. In this book, students learn to adapt a graphic organizer to fit specific writing situations. Six units are filled with writing activities to assist students in becoming more fluent writers. 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: Writing Three Paragraphs

An expanded three-paragraph graphic organizer

#### Unit 3: Writing to Describe

A descriptive writing graphic organizer

A descriptive student writing checklist

#### Unit 4: Writing to Explain a Process

A process writing graphic organizer

A "how-to" student writing checklist

#### Unit 5: Writing to Tell a Story

A narrative writing graphic organizer

Story elements for a "Build a Story" bulletin board

A story writer's checklist

#### Unit 6: Three Paragraph Products

Activity pages designed to simulate common writing test formats



Blackline Student Writing Checklists are included on pages XIX-XXI. These checklists present proofing skills in conjunction with the writing skills introduced in Units 3, 4, and 5. The Student Writing Checklists are most effective when students use them several days after writing a piece. This waiting period allows students to be more objective about their own writing.

## ASSESSMENTS

Two types of assessments 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 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.

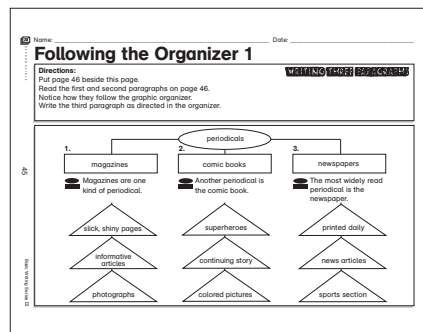
## EXPLANATION OF THE THINK, ORGANIZE, WRITE METHOD

The heart of the curriculum is the Think, Organize, Write method. This method was introduced and practiced in its most rudimentary form in *Basic Writing Series 1*, and then expanded in *Basic Writing Series 2*. In this book, the method is used for three-paragraph products.

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.

A progress chart for tracking writing skills. It includes a header for 'Name' and 'Evaluated By' with a date line. The chart lists 25 skills under the heading 'Generalize Topic'. Skills include: Research Topic in class memory, Uses Ideas From class memory, Generalize Two Main Ideas, Identifies Main Idea, Generalizes Related Details, Correctly Uses Transitional Graphic Organizer, Correctly Uses Process Graphic Organizer, Correctly Uses Narrative Graphic Organizer, Write Three Paragraphs, Correctly Capitalize, Correctly Punctuate, Correctly Use Quotation Marks, Write to Clarify, Write to Explain a Process, Write to Tell a Story, Write a Three Paragraph Report, Make Outlines from Pictures, Use Elaboration in Sentences, Use Elaborated Sentences in Paragraphs, Correctly Use Student Writing Checklist, Paragraphs in Observation, Write a Story, and Volunteers to Show. The chart has columns for tracking progress across five successive checks.

A rubric chart for numerically grading writing. It includes a header for 'Name' and 'Evaluated By' with a date line. The chart lists the same 25 skills as the progress chart. Below the skills is a grid for recording numerical ratings (0-3). At the bottom, there is a 'Scoring Scale' that maps total scores to letter grades: 80-100 = 100, 65-80 = 85, 45-65 = 65, 30-45 = 50, and 0-30 = 70.



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 3*, each of the skills supporting the Think, Organize, Write method is systematically enhanced. Skills introduced or expanded upon include the following:

**Think**

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

**Organize**

- Expansion of the graphic organizer to accommodate three-paragraph writing
- Inclusion of a descriptive graphic organizer
- Inclusion of a process graphic organizer
- Inclusion of a narrative graphic organizer

**Write**

- Addition of three editing skills
- Revision skills of time-order and story elements
- Development of three-paragraph writing
- Writing to describe
- Writing to explain a process
- Writing to tell a story

