

How to Support Writing at Home

There are several ways that you can help support your child at home with writing. Here are a variety of activities that you can do, which will target different areas in writing.

Punctuation

Many students who struggle in writing, don't effectively use punctuation marks. They often have run-on sentences, sentence fragments, or only successfully know how to use the period and the comma. Use the Punctuation Support package (2 pages) to guide you. The student will see four different paragraphs. Each paragraph has its own theme, and includes a variety of punctuation marks. The student will then copy the PATTERN of the paragraph, but choose a different theme. They are essentially TRYING to COPY – by copying the pattern, they will eventually learn the 'feel' of the way the punctuation mark is used. They could write 1-2 paragraphs each practice session.

Vocabulary

Many students who struggle in writing, have a limited vocabulary. They simply don't know enough words to help them say what they need to say. To help with this, use our 'vocabulary packages'; these are packages which target one new vocabulary word over the course of 5 different activities:

- Activity #1: Sentences (approximately 45 minutes)
 - The student is given a new word
 - The student is given the definition of the new word
 - The students is given approximately 30 sentences which all contain the new word, to show the student how it is used
- Activity #2: Drawing (approximately 10-15 minutes)
 - The student does a drawing of the picture, with an accompanying sentence that has the new word in it
- Activity #3: Skit (approximately 15-20 minutes)
 - The student writes a skit that involves them, and their parent(s)
 - The dialogue contains the new word at least once
 - They then act out the skit
- Activity #4: Comic Strip (approximately 15-20 minutes)
 - The student designs a 1-2 page comic strip, which includes the new word
- Activity #5: Short Story (approximately 15-30 minutes)
 - The student writes out a short story, which includes the new word at least once
 - The student then reads out the story to their parent

Incremental Improvements to a Writing Sample

Many students who struggle in writing, don't know how to actually improve their writing, because they are literally already doing the best that they know. Use the 'Refine Text' package to guide your student through step-by-step improvements, or follow these steps:

- #1 - Start with 5 boring sentences, all on the same topic
- #2 - Add adjectives to your sentences. You might need to add new information to each sentence, so that you can incorporate 5 new adjectives. Then re-write the sentences, so that you can make new changes.
 - You might want Google: "list of 300 adjectives", or something similar, for your child to use. They may not be able to think of adjectives on their own, but they will definitely be able to choose from a list
- #3 - Add 5 new verbs, and 5 new adverbs to your sentences. Then rewrite your sentences, so that you can make additional changes.
 - You might want Google: "list of 300 adverbs" and "list of 300 verbs", or something similar, for your child to use. They may not be able to think of these words on their own, but they will definitely be able to choose from a list
- #4 - Add background information to each line. Look at explanations, extra details, or more information that you can write after each sentence, so that you can give more description
- #5 - Eliminate any unnecessary repetition. Go back, and find other ways of saying things like "he", "him", "it", etc. This will force you to expand your word choice
- #6 - Change the order of your words. Go back, and start SOME of your sentences with different types of words - maybe start with an adjective, an adverb, or a verb. This will change the PATTERN of your parts of speech, making your sentence structure sound more interesting
 - Give them the punctuation sheet that shows them how to use each type of punctuation mark
- #7 - Add tension and memorable description. To do this, add in adjectives or adverbs that DON'T TYPICALLY DESCRIBE WHAT YOU ARE DESCRIBING. So use a sound adjective to describe a personality... or a taste adjective to describe a feeling... this will make your writing more POETIC and METAPHORICAL
- #8 - Play around with punctuation. Chances are, your writing only has commas and periods. You might have to rewrite your sentences, or even add in sentences, to include other types of punctuation marks. Throw in a colon, semi-colon, brackets, quotation marks, etc. This new punctuation will give your writing more sentence variety.

Transitions

Many students who struggle in writing, don't know how to connect ideas effectively. There are sample sheets which you can use, but you can easily work on this with your own ideas:

- Give your child 2 related sentences, such as "I like dogs", and "dogs are nice".
- They need to give you either a WORD, or a SENTENCE that can connect the two ideas:
 - Example #1: "I like dogs, BECAUSE dogs are nice"
 - Example #2: "I like dogs, and IT'S PROBABLY BECAUSE dogs are nice"
 - Example #3: "I like dogs. I HAVE ALWAYS LIKED DOGS. I FIND THAT DOGS ARE THE BEST FOR MANY REASONS, BUT MAINLY IT'S THAT dogs are nice"
- Have them find 3-5 different ways of connecting the two ideas. Do this several times.