

WRITING SKILLS CHECKLIST

EFFECTIVE WORD USE

- ___ Recognise and choose precise words for accurate meaning and interest
- ___ Recognise and choose interesting, effective words for strengthening written pieces
- ___ Identify and avoid over-used words or clichés
- ___ Recognise and choose active rather than inactive words and phrases
- ___ Identify and select words that help to create certain moods
- ___ Identify sentences with word arrangements that produce clarity, rhythm and flow
- ___ Arrange words in sentences in a manner that makes the meaning clear
- ___ Arrange words in sentences to give an interesting rhythm and smooth flow
- ___ Identify words or phrases that are repetitive or unnecessary in a written passage
- ___ Identify words or phrases that suggest the author's bias
- ___ Recognise and choose words and phrases that produce strong sensory images; identify the sense to which the writing appeals

RECOGNITION OF FORMS & TECHNIQUES

- ___ Identify examples and uses of expository, descriptive, persuasive and imaginative writing
- ___ Recognise passages in which varied sentence structure and length makes the writing interesting and effective
- ___ Distinguish between poetry and prose; identify characteristics of each
- ___ Identify definitions or characteristics of different forms of writing
- ___ Identify use of writing techniques and literary devices (puns, similes, metaphors, idioms, alliteration, personification, hyperbole, onomatopoeia)
- ___ Identify good use of details to support and enhance an idea
- ___ Identify the point of view from which a passage was written
- ___ Recognise writing in which form, style or content appeals to a specific audience
- ___ Recognise writing in which form, style or content fits a certain purpose for the writing
- ___ Identify specific uses of literary techniques in a passage
- ___ Identify ways a writer uses words for a particular purpose
- ___ Recognise sensory appeal in a passage

THINGS TO WRITE ABOUT

Write about some of these things. The writing can be real or imaginary, serious or silly, factual or fictitious, impartial or biased.

Choose any form that fits your topic. (See pages 9 and 10 for many choices.)

Let these topics inspire you to think about other good topics for writing.

adventures – real or imaginary, any kind, anywhere, any time in history or the future

annoyances – things that anger, bother, mildly disturb or disappoint you

art – any kind of work of art, including those that YOU create

beliefs – yours or someone else's . . . What are they? Why are they believed?

books – any book, whether you like it or not.

changes – why things have, might, did not or should change

current events – whatever is (*or is not*) in the news, in the world or in your neighbourhood

dreams – daydreams or night time dreams

entertainment – any show, commercial, program or other kind of performance

families – interesting relatives, their antics, relationships and influences on each other

fantasies – all that good stuff that probably cannot happen, but just maybe . . .

feelings – joy, jealousy, surprise, fury, hurt, frustration or any other human feeling

food – all that tempting, enticing, delicious, fun, luscious or disgusting stuff

friends – their lives, their characteristics, their relationships, their activities

the future – adventures, possibilities, lifestyles, technology that might be

good deeds – touching, surprising or unnoticed good things people do

hobbies – yours or the surprising hobbies of others

holidays – what's great (*or not great*) about any holiday; or which holidays should be invented

hot issues – topics out there that are capturing the passions of people, right now!

imaginary creatures – such as ghosts, goblins, leprechauns, trolls, elves, gnomes

land formations – mountains, hills, valleys, canyons, caves, gorges, canals, plateaus

manners – admirable behaviour, bad behaviour, or in between

the media – what it does (*or does not*) do, what is good, bad, harmful, enriching, controlling etc.

BETTER WAYS WITH ORDINARY WORDS

Synonyms for Words Frequently Used in Students' Writing

afraid – fearful, alarmed, timid, apprehensive, frightened, terrified, anxious, insecure, cowardly, suspicious, mistrustful

amazing – incredible, unbelievable, improbable, fabulous, wonderful, fantastic, astonishing, astounding, extraordinary

angry – mad, furious, enraged, excited, wrathful, indignant, exasperated, aroused, inflamed

answer – reply, respond, retort, acknowledge

ask – question, inquire of, seek information from, put a question to, demand, request, expect, inquire, query, interrogate, examine, quiz

awful – dreadful, terrible, abominable, bad, poor, unpleasant

bad – evil, immoral, wicked, corrupt, sinful, depraved, rotten, contaminated, spoiled, tainted, harmful, injurious, unfavorable, defective, inferior, imperfect, substandard, faulty, improper, inappropriate, unsuitable, disagreeable, unpleasant, cross, nasty, unfriendly, irascible, horrible, atrocious, outrageous, scandalous, infamous, wrong, noxious, sinister, putrid, snide, deplorable, dismal, gross, heinous, nefarious, base, obnoxious, detestable, despicable, contemptible, foul, rank, ghastly, execrable

beautiful – pretty, lovely, handsome, attractive, gorgeous, dazzling, splendid, magnificent, comely, fair, ravishing, graceful, elegant, fine, exquisite, aesthetic, pleasing, shapely, delicate, stunning, glorious, heavenly, resplendent, radiant, glowing, blooming, sparkling

begin – start, open, launch, initiate, commence, inaugurate, originate

big – enormous, huge, immense, gigantic, vast, colossal, gargantuan, large, sizeable, grand, great, tall, substantial, mammoth, astronomical, ample, broad, expansive, spacious, stout, tremendous, titanic, mountainous

brave – courageous, fearless, dauntless, intrepid, plucky, daring, heroic, valorous, audacious, bold, gallant, valiant

break – fracture, rupture, shatter, smash, wreck, crash, demolish

bright – shining, shiny, gleaming, brilliant, sparkling, shimmering, radiant, vivid, colourful, lustrous, luminous, incandescent, intelligent, knowing, quick-witted, smart, intellectual

boring – dull, doleful, stolid, dismal, gloomy, dowdy, tiresome

THE WRITING PROCESS

STEP 1 ROMANCING

. . . a group experience, an individual experience, a thought, a piece of literature, an unexpected happening, a common feeling, a question, a memory, a discussion, a shocking happening, a surprise event, an activity in a content area – anything that sparks writing!

This is the reason for writing – the motivator – the spark that gets ideas brewing. It may start with an activity designed by a teacher, or writers may grab onto something that's already there inside them. Spend plenty of time on this step. When writers can't think of anything to say, or do not want to write, it is usually because they have not been sufficiently romanced!

STEP 2 COLLECTING

. . . the gathering of ideas, words, fragments, thoughts, facts, phrases, questions and observations

This is the most fun and creative part of the writing process. It is the stage where writers brainstorm, sometimes alone and sometimes with others. It's the time to gather all the bits and pieces of words and ideas that will become the piece of writing. Take plenty of time for collecting. Write down everything. A writer can always eliminate, expand and combine ideas later.

STEP 3 ORGANISING

. . . the time for taking a close look at all those words, phrases, and ideas you have collected and think about what fits with what

In this step, writers look closely at what has been collected, and begin to pull ideas together in some way. This might be done with lines and arrows, diagrams, clusters, outlines, webs or lists. During the organising step, a writer might find some facts or ideas missing. She might go back for a bit to step two to gather some more good stuff to fit into the organisational plan!

STEP 4 DRAFTING

. . . the pull-it-together stage

Here is where the writing of whole lines and sentences actually begins. The writer looks at the groupings or outline and starts to put ideas, words and phrases together into lines, sentences and paragraphs. Take time for this step. Remember that it is a ROUGH draft. It does not have to be final or complete. There is time for adding, changing, subtracting and rearranging later.

STEP 5 REVIEWING

. . . the author's chance to get the draft out in the open and see how it looks or hear how it sounds

At this point, the writer gives a quick overview to the piece, perhaps reading it aloud. This allows the writer to think about whether it makes sense or sounds right, and if, in general, it says what was intended.

SPELLING HELPS

The following spelling rules are generalisations and do not occur all of the time; however, they are often true and are valuable spelling aids.

1. Each syllable of a word must contain one sounded vowel (*an i ma li a*).
2. A vowel is more likely to be pronounced short than long (*bed*).
3. A vowel at the end of a one-syllable word is usually long (*be*).
4. The final **e** in a one-syllable word is usually silent (*lake*).
5. When **i** precedes **gh**, it is usually long (*bright*).
6. The letter **i** comes before **e** except (1) after **c** or (2) when sounded like **a** (as in *neighbour* or *weigh*).
7. Usually, a doubled consonant or vowel has one sound (*letter, boot*).
8. When two vowels are together, the first one usually says its own name (*team*).
9. The **ch** sound is often spelled **tch** (*catch*).
10. The **j** sound is often spelled **dg** or **dge** (*dredge, smudge*).
11. The **j** sound may be made by **g** (*giant, garage*).
12. The **k** sound may be made by **c** or **ck** (*came, stack*).
13. The **gh** combination is usually silent (*dough, fright*), but sometimes sounds like **f** (*tough, laugh*).
14. Sometimes the **gh** combination produces a hard **g** sound (*ghost, ghastly*).
15. The consonants **c** and **g** are soft before **i**, **e** and **y** (*cinder, gentle, cyst*); otherwise, they are hard (*go, car*).
16. The ending **-ance** is spelled **-ence** in some words (*endurance, presence*).
17. The ending **-ous** may follow an **e** or an **i** (*extraneous, delicious*).
18. The ending **-tion** (sounds like **shun**) is spelled **-cian**, **-sian**, **-sion**, or **-tian** in some words (*station, physician, Prussian, decision, Dalmatian*).
19. To pluralise a word that ends with a **y** preceded by a consonant, change the **y** to **i** and add **es** (*cry, cries*).
20. The common prefixes **en-**, **in-** and **un-** are not used interchangeably.