

## Procedures and Expectations for Guided Writing

### Procedures

Context: *Students write a brief response to the story they read during guided reading. At emergent levels, use dictated sentences that include known high-frequency words, the new sight word that was taught that day, and at least one unknown word students must stretch out to hear the sounds. Once students gain control over a large bank of high-frequency words (40-50), the response becomes more student-generated.*

Purpose: *The goal is for students to learn how to apply the skills and strategies that have been taught during the small group lesson. The teacher provides support at the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky). By framing the response so that it relates to the guided reading text, students are extending their comprehension and learning how to respond to reading.*

### Target Skills and Strategies by Level

*Struggling writers in the intermediate grades and almost all primary writers need a lot of supported writing experiences before skills are internalized. The following is a partial listing of common strategies and skills for each level. It should not be used as a checklist for students but as a guide to help teachers plan appropriate guided writing experiences.*

**Pre-A** – Students at this level are still learning letters, sounds, and early print concepts. After reading a book together, the teacher dictates a short sentence for the group to write interactively.

Target skills and strategies for Pre-A interactive writing:

- Segment initial consonant sounds.
- Consonant sounds
- Letter formation

**Level A (1)** – Students write a simple dictated sentence of three to five words. The sentence should include the new sight word that was taught that day. Encourage students to stretch unknown words and record dominant consonant sounds.

Target skills and strategies for Level A:

- Segment and record the initial consonant sound in each word.
- Hear and record long vowel sounds in words (with prompting).
- Learn to write about ten high-frequency words in text (the, my, to, go, see, can, is, me, am, etc.).
- Continue to work on letter formation.
- Space with the support of lines.

**Level B (2)** – The teacher dictates a sentence (five to seven words) that relates to the story. The sentence should include the new sight word that was taught that day, other known high-frequency words, and several unknown words students must stretch out to hear sounds. After students repeat the sentence several times, they write it independently as the teacher circulates and supports individual students.

Target skills and strategies for Level B:

- Reread the sentence to predict and monitor (with prompting).
- Hear and record dominant consonant sounds in each word.
- Hear and record long vowel sounds in words.
- Hear and record short "a" and short "o" sounds in words (with prompting).
- Learn to write about 15-20 high-frequency words in text.
- Introduce a period at the end of the sentence.
- Space with the support of the lines.

**Level C (3/4)** – The teacher dictates a sentence (seven to ten words) that relates to the story. The sentence should include the new sight word that was taught that day, other known high-frequency words, and several unknown words students must stretch out to hear sounds. If time permits, the teacher may dictate a second sentence or guide students to construct their own sentence using the pattern from the dictated sentence.

Target skills and strategies for Level C:

- Remember and reread the sentence without prompting.
- Say each word slowly as you write.

- Learn to write about 30 high-frequency words.
- Hear and record CVC sounds in sequence with an emphasis on the medial vowel.
- Space between words without the support of teacher-drawn lines.
- Put a period at the end of the sentence without prompting.
- Introduce a capital letter at the beginning of the sentence.

**Level D (5/6)** – The teacher dictates two sentences that relate to the story. The sentences should include many high-frequency words that have been taught in the guided reading lessons. Always include the new sight word for the lesson. In addition, the sentence should be crafted to include the phonics focus such as digraphs (th, sh, ch) and/or simple endings (-s, -ing, -ed). Avoid non-phonetic high-frequency words that have not been taught. Students should now be spacing without teacher support. Transition from using unlined paper to a paper containing four or five lines. Students will learn how to write each letter so it touches the line. You may need to provide instruction on letters that fall below the line (g, j, p, y).

Target skills and strategies for Level D:

- Reread each sentence to monitor for meaning.
- Say unknown words slowly to segment sounds.
- Hear and record short vowels with little prompting.
- Hear and record digraphs (sh, ch, th) in words.
- Only use a capital letter for the first word in the sentence. All other words should be written with lowercase letters.
- Correctly add endings to known words (looked, going, likes, etc.).
- Learn to write letters that touch and fall below the line (g, j, p, y).
- Learn to write 30-40 high-frequency words in text.
- Space without prompting.
- Correctly use periods without prompting.

**Level E (7/8)** – If students have developed automaticity with a large bank of high-frequency words, it is now appropriate to use student-generated responses. Frameworks that work well at this level include writing two sentences about the story (something that happened at the beginning and the middle or end) or writing about the problem and solution of the story. If students are responding to an informational text, they could write two things they learned from the story.

If students are still struggling with spelling high-frequency words, continue to dictate sentences that contain many high-frequency words, especially those that cannot be sounded out. Most children at this level are ready to transition to simple handwriting paper with a dotted line to guide letter size. Teach students how to use the handwriting paper to form "tall" and "short" letters.

Target skills and strategies for Level E:

- Write two or three sentences about the story.
- Learn to write about 40-50 high-frequency words in text.
- Hear and record initial blends in words.
- Hear and record endings (s, ing, ed, er) on known and unfamiliar words.
- Hear and record known parts in words.
- Learn to use handwriting paper.
- Before writing, rehearse each sentence to learn where to put the period.
- Capitalize proper names in text (with support).

**Level F (9/10)** – Students should now have a large bank of high-frequency words they can write. They should also be able to write any one-syllable word phonetically. However, do not expect correct use of vowel combinations and the silent "e" rule. Few children will have internalized those skills at this level. Students should also be able to construct their own simple summaries guided by the illustrations in the book. Appropriate formats include the Beginning – Middle – End (BME) and the Somebody-Wanted-But-So (SWBS). If students are still learning English, be sure to have them rehearse each sentence with you so you can correct the structure. Then have the student repeat the sentence before writing it. Emphasize the importance of rereading each sentence before writing the next one.

Target skills and strategies for Level F:

- Write a BME (three sentences) with prompting.

- Introduce the SWBS.
- Build automaticity with 40-50 high-frequency words.
- Hear and record initial and final blends in one-syllable words.
- Break a two-syllable word and stretch out each part.
- Build fluency with correct letter formation.
- Introduce quotation marks to frame dialogue.

**Level G/H (11-14)** – Children’s writing fluency should continue to improve as they move up in reading levels. By now they should be able to write three to five sentences in 10 minutes. You may still need to help students plan their response by listening to their ideas before they write them. The oral rehearsal is especially important for children who are learning English as a second language. The BME response is now extended to include four or five sentences, and students will take on more responsibility for writing the SWBS.

Target skills and strategies for Levels G/H:

- Construct a BME (four – five sentences) with support.
- Construct a SWBS with support.
- Add –er, -ly to known words (e.g. player, lovely).
- Use quotation marks in writing dialogue (with support).
- Apply the silent “e” rule in writing (with support).
- Spell one-syllable words phonetically with correct application of skills that have been taught.
- Prompt students to apply vowel combinations you have taught (ay, all, ar, or, ee, oo, etc.).

**Level I (15-16)** – Since the guided reading lesson framework still allows only 10 minutes for guided writing, expect only four to five sentences (although students will be able to write longer responses). As you teach additional vowel patterns during word study, prompt for the application in writing. Students should have a strong grasp of the concept of a sentence and the need for capital letters and end punctuation. Letter formation should be improving.

Target skills and strategies for Level I:

- Independently construct three to five sentences that sequence events.
- Apply the silent “e” rule in writing.
- Introduce the concept of dropping the silent “e” when adding “ing” (e.g. hiking, riding, coming).
- Write new words using patterns from known words. For example, students might use the known word, “look” to write “shook.”
- Apply more vowel patterns (–ow, ew, -oa, -ight, -oy, etc.). Students will likely make errors with phonic elements that can be represented in more than one way. For example “right” might be spelled “rite” and “house” might be “howse.”

**Level J+ (18+)** – The transitional lesson plan is extended to three days. During the first two days with the text, students read the book and spend about three to five minutes on directed word study. The third day of the plan provides for 10 to 20 minutes of guided writing. There is no limit to the type of response transitional readers can write during guided writing. Aim for a format that can be completed during the 20-minute timeframe since the purpose of guided writing is to provide teacher support while students write. The following is a partial list of responses. If you had a specific comprehension focus for your guided reading lesson (such as making connections or asking questions), match the guided writing response to the comprehension focus strategy. Regardless of the response format, always plan with the students before they write by discussing the story and listing a few important words students should use in their responses.

Response Options for Transitional Levels

- **Beginning – Middle – End (BME)** – Students summarize the story by sequencing important events.
- **Five-Finger Retell** – Students write about the characters, setting, problem, events, and ending.
- **Somebody-Wanted-But-So** (MacOn, Bewell & Vogt, 1991) – Students use this framework to summarize the gist of the story. Example: *Clare* (the somebody) wanted to tryout for the pirate role in the school play, but she was afraid to do it by herself so she brought the parrot with her.
- **Problem and Solution** – Students describe the problem of the main character and how it was solved.

• **Problem (feelings) and Solution (feelings)** – Students include the character’s feelings as they describe the problem and solution of the story. Example: *Clare felt shy because she didn’t want to tryout for the play by herself. She solved her problem by bringing her pet parrot to the tryout. This helped her feel more confident.*

• **Chapter Summaries** - This response works for either fiction or nonfiction as long as the text is divided into chapters. Before students write, list key words on a Post-it note and have students match the key words to a specific chapter using the table of contents (use the glossary or index with informational texts). Then assign a chapter for each student to summarize. Students use the key words, chapter titles, and illustrations to write a detailed paragraph about the assigned chapter.

• **Track the character’s feelings for the B-M-E.** Students summarize the major events in a plot by recalling the character’s feelings and what caused those feelings. Before students write, record several “feeling” words on Post-it notes. This boosts students’ vocabulary and steers them from using common words like “happy,” “sad,” and “mad.” Distribute the Post-it notes and help students correctly sequence the characters’ feelings on a BME chart.

B	M	E
excited	shy	proud
nervous	afraid	confident

Using the key words from the plan, students then write three short paragraphs describing the beginning, the middle and the end. For example:

*In the beginning, Clare felt excited because she was going to ride a pony. She was nervous because this was the very first time she was on a pony. Her friend, Abby, went with her to calm her nerves.*

*In the middle Clare went for a ride on the pony. She was shy about telling her pony what to do. When the pony took off running, Clare was afraid she would fall off.*

*At the end of the story, Clare was proud that she had learned how to ride a pony. Next time she rides a horse, she will be more confident.*

**Target skills and strategies for Levels J+**

If a student can independently write a meaningful, organized response, guided writing is probably not needed. The following chart lists possible teaching points for transitional writers along with scaffolds that help these students internalize the target skill.

Target Skills	Scaffolds
Meaning – Does it make sense?	Orally rehearse each sentence with the student and correct structure if necessary. Encourage short sentences the student can remember. Student rereads each sentence to check meaning.
Phonetic spelling	Use sound boxes to help the student segment sounds. Clap each syllable of big words and say each part slowly to hear sounds.
Spacing	Prompt: “Pick up your pencil after you write a word.” If necessary, draw lines for words.
Complete sentences	Teach the student how to create a sentence using one or two key words. Orally rehearse each sentence before writing and correct structure if needed. Allow only one “and” per sentence (to discourage run-on sentences).
Punctuation (periods)	Prompt the student to rehearse the sentence and make a fist after saying the last word. The “fist” is a physical reminder to put the period. Prompt the student to reread and listen for the punctuation.
Capital letter	Prompt the student to check the word after each period to see if it begins with a capital letter.
Letter formation; Handwriting	Teach the student how to use handwriting paper and an alphabet strip. Prompt him or her to use only lower case letters except at the beginning of a sentence.
Spelling	Teach the student how to use a single-page personal word wall of frequently misspelled words. Also encourage him or her to use the book as a spelling resource.
Organization	Always have students plan with key words before they write. Prompt students to refer to their plan as they write so they stay focused. After they use a key word, they should check it off on the plan.

