

Writing Skills Checklist

Directions: Use this checklist to inventory students' foundation writing skills. Any writing skill that is marked 'N[o]' should be targeted for intervention.

Problem?	Writing Competency	Sample Intervention Ideas
Physical Production of Writing		
__Y __N	<i>Writing Speed.</i> Writes words on the page at a rate equal or nearly equal to that of classmates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach keyboarding skills • Allow student to dictate ideas into a tape-recorder and have a volunteer (e.g., classmate, parent, school personnel) transcribe them
__Y __N	<i>Handwriting.</i> Handwriting is legible to most readers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training in handwriting • Teach keyboarding skills
Mechanics & Conventions of Writing		
__Y __N	<i>Grammar & Syntax.</i> Knowledge of grammar (rules governing use of language) and syntax (grammatical arrangement of words in sentences) is appropriate for age and/or grade placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach rules of grammar, syntax • Have students compile individualized checklists of their own common grammar/syntax mistakes; direct students to use the checklist to review work for errors before turning in
__Y __N	<i>Spelling.</i> Spelling skills are appropriate for age and/or grade placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have student collect list of own common misspellings; assign words from list to study; quiz student on list items • Have student type assignments and use spell-check
Writing Content		
__Y __N	<i>Vocabulary.</i> Vocabulary in written work is age/grade appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile list of key vocabulary and related definitions for subject area; assign words from list to study; quiz student on definitions of list items • Introduce new vocabulary items regularly to class; set up cooperative learning activities for students to review vocabulary
__Y __N	<i>Word Choice.</i> Distinguishes word-choices that are appropriate for informal (colloquial, slang) written discourse vs. formal discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present examples to the class of formal vs. informal word choices • Have students check work for appropriate word choice as part of writing revision process
__Y __N	<i>Audience.</i> Identifies targeted audience for writing assignments and alters written content to match needs of projected audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct students to write a 'targeted audience profile' as a formal (early) step in the writing process; have students evaluate the final writing product to needs of targeted audience during the revision process
__Y __N	<i>Plagiarism.</i> Identifies when to credit authors for use of excerpts quoted verbatim or unique ideas taken from other written works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define plagiarism for students. Use plentiful examples to show students acceptable vs. unacceptable incorporation of others' words or ideas into written compositions

Writing Preparation		
___Y ___N	<i>Topic Selection.</i> Independently selects appropriate topics for writing assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have student generate list of general topics that that interest him or her; sit with the student to brainstorm ideas for writing topics that relate to the student's own areas of interest
___Y ___N	<i>Writing Plan.</i> Creates writing plan by breaking larger writing assignments into sub-tasks (e.g., select topic, collect source documents, take notes from source documents, write outline, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create generic pre-formatted work plans for writing assignments that break specific types of larger assignments (e.g., research paper) into constituent parts. Have students use these plan outlines as a starting point to making up their own detailed writing plans.
___Y ___N	<i>Note-Taking.</i> Researches topics by writing notes that capture key ideas from source material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach note-taking skills; have students review note-cards with the teacher as quality check.
Writing Production & Revision		
___Y ___N	<i>Adequate 'Seat Time.'</i> Allocates realistic amount of time to the act of writing to ensure a quality final product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use teacher's experience and information from proficient student writers to develop estimates of minimum writing 'seat time' needed to produce quality products for 'typical' writing assignments (e.g., 5-paragraph opinion essay; 10-page term paper). Share with students. Have students keep a writing diary to record amount of time spent in act of writing for each assignment. Require that this information be submitted along with the students' assignment. (Additional idea: Consider asking parents to monitor and record their child's writing time.)
___Y ___N	<i>Oral vs. Written Work.</i> Student's dictated and written passages are equivalent in complexity and quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow student to dictate ideas into a tape-recorder and have a volunteer (e.g., classmate, parent, school personnel) transcribe them Permit the student to use speech-to-text software (e.g., Dragon Naturally Speaking) to dictate first drafts of writing assignments.
___Y ___N	<i>Revision Process.</i> Revises initial written draft before turning in for a grade or evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a rubric containing the elements of writing that students should review during the revision process; teach this rubric to the class; link a portion of the grade on writing assignments to students' use of the revision rubric.
___Y ___N	<i>Timely Submission.</i> Turns in written assignments (class work, homework) on time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide student incentives for turning work in on time. Work with parents to develop home-based plans for work completion and submission. Institute school-home communication to let parents know immediately when important assignments are late or missing.