

# Writing Activities

## LONELY HEARTS

Jo-ann Maynard tried something clever with her student. Copying the "Lonely Hearts" ads in the paper, she had her student write his own "personal ad." We don't know if her student sent it to the paper, but thought it was a clever way to get the student to do some writing.

## WRITING TOPICS

Writing is often considered the neglected link to reading. Tutors should encourage their students to write something at each tutoring session. Below are some suggested writing topics:

grocery lists	lonely heart ads	journal or diary	letters
receipts	catalog orders	Bible verses	family history
pen pals	poetry	greeting cards	contests

## SENTENCE COMBINING

Sentence Combining is a process that can be used to teach reading as well as writing. It does not teach grammar or mechanics. The purpose is to teach by doing. Below is a short exercise that can be used in tutoring.

1. George opened a drawer.
2. The drawer was in the kitchen.
3. He took out a book.
4. The book was for recipes.
5. He opened the book
6. He looked at the recipe.
7. The recipe was for stew.
8. Then he opened a door.
9. The door was to the refrigerator.
10. He took out the carrots.
11. He took out the onions.
12. He took out the meat.
14. He picked up a knife.
15. The knife was used for butchering.
16. He cut the meat.
17. The meat was red.
18. He cut it into cubes.
19. The cubes were thick.
20. Then he cut the carrots.
21. The carrots were fresh.
22. They cracked under his knife.
23. The crack was sharp.

To combine sentences you might say, "George opened the kitchen drawer. He took out a recipe book. He opened the book to look for a stew recipe."

Source: Sentence Combining. A Composing Book by William Strong published by Random House, 1973.

## A TASTY MANGO

Jan Whitlock and her student were working on a lesson when they came across the word, "mango." Her student didn't know what a mango was, so they looked it up in the dictionary. The following week Jan brought a mango to the tutoring session. Larry's homework was to take the mango home and write a descriptive paragraph about it which included the following information:

- ✧ The mango's appearance before cutting
- ✧ The mango's weight
- ✧ How it smelled before and after cutting
- ✧ What the seed looked like
- ✧ How it tasted
- ✧ The color of the mango, both the shell and inside
- ✧ Find a recipe that included mangos as an ingredient

Needless to say, Larry now knows a great deal about the mango! Thanks, Jan, for a Grrrrreat tutoring tip!

## **WRITING AT EACH SESSION**

Writing during each tutoring session is integral to the lesson. Keep in mind that the amount counts. For a beginning writer, stress the quantity of the writing, not the quality. Frequency is also key. Many repetitions help to learn a skill.

Encourage risk taking by not correcting the student's writing. There will be lots of opportunities to subtly blend errors into lessons.

Written a letter lately? Students are perfect recipients for brief upbeat notes. Encourage them to respond, maybe even providing stamps.

Yet another approach is a dialogue journal. Use a notebook and take turns posing questions for each other to answer.

Of course, encourage students to keep their own daily writing journal. It's a great yardstick of progress.

A final tip: kick off a session with sustained writing. Set a timer for a short time. Have the student write anything that comes to mind, even if it is repetitious. Over time, the content will improve and the student will enjoy a strong sense of mastery.

Source: PEN PALS, Lake Land College Adult Literacy Program

## **WRITING PROCESS**

*Prewriting--Talk and Think About It!*

Observe, imagine  
Brainstorm  
Interview  
Discuss  
Confer, share, reflect

*Drafting--Get It Down*

Organize, combine, delete  
Develop topic sentences  
Use supporting materials  
Expand sentences (5 W's)  
Circle word or use a "?" if spelling is uncertain

*Revising--Check it Out!*

Is my message clear?  
Have I included enough information?  
Do I speak to my audience?  
Do I accomplish my purpose?

*Editing--Let's Hear It!*

Read it aloud to yourself. (Does it sound OK?)  
Ask a friend to listen. (Any suggestions?)  
Mechanics checklist (indenting, capital letters, ending punctuation, spelling)

*Publishing--Share It!*

Display it or  
Read it aloud or  
Submit it for publication

Source: National Reading Styles Institute.

**YOUR STUDENT CAN WRITE A POEM, TOO!**

The following instructions have been passed along by Dr. Linda Thistlewaite of Central Illinois Adult Education Service Center. The poem format gives your student the opportunity to learn more about themselves and allows the tutor to learn more about his/her student. So encourage your student to write. It is fun and the subject is unbeatable--your student!

*BIOGRAPHY POEM FORMAT*

Line 1 Your first name only  
Line 2 Four traits that describe you  
Line 3 "Sibling of" or "son of" or "daughter of"  
Line 4 "Lover of..." (3 people or ideas)  
Line 5 "Who feels..." (3 items)

Line 6 "Who needs..."(3 items)  
Line 7 "Who gives..."(3 items)  
Line 8 "Who fears..." (3 items)  
Line 9 "Who would like to see..." (3 items)

### *BIOGRAPHY POEM EXAMPLE; KATHY*

Kathy,  
Loveable, likeable, sincere, and graceful  
Girlfriend of Ricki, mother of Richard, daughter of Sharon.  
Lover of trees, snow and leaves.  
Who feels lonely when I am away from my boyfriend and  
when my day doesn't go right and the day I don't have my son.  
Who needs a job, a place to live, and love.  
Who gives love, respect and attention.  
Who fears being lost out in the woods, losing my family and boyfriend.  
Who would like to see happiness for my mom, myself,  
others, and people that need help in things.

### **PERSONAL STORIES**

Following is one strategy to help your student find topics for writing. In this exercise, you tell the student that one way to find things to write about is to think about his/her neighborhood.

Who do they see on a regular basis ? Where does s/he shop? What sounds are heard and who makes them? Steps to Activity

1. Model drawing a map of your neighborhood, indicating your own personal "landmarks."
2. Ask student to draw his/her own neighborhood with personal "landmarks".
3. Have student describe maps to you.
4. Have student select one of the landmarks on the map and write about it.
5. Ask student to think about questions such as "Why did I choose this landmark?"

"What is special about it? "What time of day do you recognize this landmark?" "Is there a story that goes with the landmark?"

6. Have student read his/her stories to you.