

Writing Strands

A COMPLETE WRITING PROGRAM
USING A PROCESS APPROACH
TO WRITING AND COMPOSITION

ASSURING
CONTINUITY AND CONTROL

LEVEL 6

of
a complete writing program
for homeschoolers

a
publication
of

NATIONAL WRITING INSTITUTE
624 W. University #248
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INTRODUCTION

This group of exercises is designed to help students (usually advanced high school students who haven't used *Writing Strands*, or any student who has finished *Writing Strands 5*) learn the very complicated process of giving others their thoughts in written form.

Learning to write skillfully is one of the hardest jobs that you have. These exercises will make it easier. Much of the planning and detail of the writing process is presented here.

The writing exercises in this level are in three categories: creative, research and report, and explanatory. The exercises in each of these areas will guide you in the development of the skills you will need.

Rather than increase the work for your parents, this writing process should make it easier for both you and your parents to meet the demands for more student writing.

When these exercises are completed, you'll have a well-founded introduction to this most difficult skill, and your parents will find it easier to have confidence that this part of the teaching challenge has been met.

When you finish each writing exercise, if you then spend about a week reading and discussing ideas with your parents, you will have a language arts program that will last you for a full year. If you are a more advanced student doing some catch up or if you want to do two or three days in one day in this book, that's fine; finish sooner.

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HOW TO MAKE *WRITING STRANDS* WORK FOR YOU

1. You should have a writing folder containing all of your written work which should be kept for your next level. This will give you a place to store and record your skills, and it's a great thing for your parents to have if they have to make a report on your progress.
2. You and your parents should track what you have learned and what you still need to learn. Here are some ways to do that:
 - a) After every assignment, you should fill in the record of progress which follows the assignment.
 - b) Your parents should fill out the Writing Skills Mastery as you complete assignments.
 - c) Writers can always learn new things, and young writers shouldn't expect to fix all their problems right away. Your parents can keep track of the problems they've noted but you haven't yet solved using the Spelling List and List of Problems to Solve.
3. Each exercise begins with a suggested time for completion. Of course, all students work at different rates. The suggested daily activities can be combined or extended depending on your desire and your goals.
4. Many of the exercises suggest that your parents will work with you during your writing period reading what you have written. If this is done, it will serve two purposes:
 - a) It will give you constant feedback and will allow your parents to catch many writing problems before they appear in your final papers.
 - b) It will greatly cut down on your parents' correcting time. Most of the proofreading can be done during your writing time, so, even though you will be writing much more than you previously have been, your parents should be able to help you more using even less time.
5. Your parents should use the book *Evaluating Writing* to help them and you with your writing. If they do, it will help you both a great deal with the development of your skills.
6. It might be good if you don't write in this book at all but use other paper and make copies of those pages at the end of each semester's work where you can list the problems you've solved and the ones at the end of each exercise called "Record of Progress." This way your book will be completely clean for your younger brothers or sisters to use.

PRINCIPLES

The following principles were adopted by National Writing Institute before work began on *Writing Strands*. They were our guides in the initial stages of the design of the exercises.

1. Every person needs to learn to express ideas and feelings in writing.
2. There is no one right way to write anything.
3. The ability to write is not an expression of a body of knowledge that can be learned like a list of vocabulary words.
4. Both writing teachers and their students learn in any effective writing situation.
5. The product of each student's writing efforts must be seen as a success for at least the following reasons:
 - a) A student in a writing situation is not in competition with anyone else.
 - b) There is no perfect model against which any effort can be compared for evaluation, so there is no best way for any student to write.
 - c) Every controlled writing experience will help students improve the ability to express themselves.
6. All student writing efforts are worthy of praise. The most help any writing teacher can give at any point is to show, in a positive way, what is good about a piece and how it might be improved.
7. Any writing lesson assigned that is done independently by the student without a teacher's constant feedback in the form of reinforcement and suggestions represents a missed opportunity for the student.
8. All writing is hard work, and every writer should be encouraged to feel the pride of authorship.
9. All young authors need to be published. This can be accomplished by having their work read to other family members, posted on bulletin boards (refrigerators), printed in "books" or read by other family members.
10. Students should learn that writing is fun, exciting and rewarding. This cannot be taught to a student who is punished by being made to write. Punishments, such as writing fifty times "I will not argue with my brothers," will certainly destroy the joy of learning to write.

EXERCISES, SKILLS, AND OBJECTIVES

Exercise 1: **Body Control**

Skill Strand: Creative

1. Accepting that adults are better than teenagers at controlling their body movements
2. Using this knowledge in writing

Exercise 2: **If I Were a . . .**

Skill Strand: Research and Report

1. Understanding that the things we call good and bad are determined by who we are
2. Realizing that ideas may be looked at in more than one way
3. Understanding that the organization of a report should help the reader understand it

Exercise 3: **Conflict**

Skill Strand: Creative

1. Understanding that conflict is one of the things that makes reading stories fun
2. Creating conflicts in writing

Exercise 4: **Point of View**

Skill Strand: Explanatory

1. Knowing three of the choices an author has in his use of point of view
2. Understanding how these point of view elements work
3. Understanding the structuring of an explanatory exposition
4. Writing an explanatory exposition

Exercise 5: **Survey**

Skill Strand: Research and Report

1. Writing unbiased questions
2. Selecting a representative sample as respondents to a survey
3. Taking a survey

Exercise 6: **Book Report**

Skill Strand: Research and Report

1. Identifying the forces in conflict in a novel
2. Describing these forces
3. Showing how these forces are important to the book

Exercise 7: **Disorder**

Skill Strand: Research and Report

1. Observing a situation and taking notes
2. Describing what has been seen over a period of days
3. Writing a formal scientific report

Exercise 8: **Interview With a Character**

Skill Strand: Research and Report

1. Understanding that imaginary characters sometimes do what they want to do
2. Writing an interview

Exercise 9: **Who Me?**

Skill Strand: Creative

1. Recognizing that in some short stories there are stock or stereotypical characters
2. Understanding that some of the characters seen on TV are stock characters
3. Creating both stock characters and characters who have individuality

Exercise 10: Choices of Action

Skill Strand: Creative

1. Describing a personal decision a person might have to make by giving that decision to a character
2. Putting a character in a situation where the reader can see the character trying to make a decision that will be a good one

Exercise 11: Problems

Skill Strand: Creative

1. Constructing an argument between two people
2. Punctuating dialogue
3. Describing, in a dialogue, characters' major body movements caused by their emotional reactions

Exercise 12: Writing Letters

Skill Strand: Research and Report

1. Understanding the principles of business letters
2. Formatting business letters
3. Writing business letters

STRANDS

There are four modes, or strands, of writing in the adult world: creative, argumentative, research and report, and explanatory. This book focuses mainly on the creative, research and report, and explanatory strands. Since you cannot possibly master any of these strands in a single exercise, the Writing Strands series includes several exercises for each strand. The program begins with easy assignments to introduce you to each strand. Then, as your writing improves, the exercises become more difficult and complex. By the end of the series, you will have a strong control of each of these strands.

To help you and your parents understand how this progression of difficulty works, this page lists the strands addressed in this book, the exercises that present the strands, and the page numbers for each exercise. Do the assignments in the sequence they are presented in, not in the order below.

Creative

Exercise 1. Body Control	1
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Research and Report

Exercise 2. If I Were a . . .	7
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Explanatory

Exercise 4. Point of View	20
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NOT RULES, MORE LIKE SUGGESTIONS

In almost everything we do, there are rules (like laws), which we have to live by, and then there are what we call “rules,” which we should follow and agree to follow because doing so makes life nicer for everyone.

This is also true in writing. As an example of the difference in the rules of writing, look at the rule (law) that says that every sentence must start with a capital letter. We all must follow this rule when we write. A “rule” of writing is that we use an exclamation point only once a year.

The following “rules” are just strong suggestions. You can violate them if you want to. However, it might be good to keep in mind that if you do, your readers will look at your writing the same way that the company at dinner might look at you if you burped at the end of the meal. So, below is a short list of the “rules” of writing:

1. Don't use exclamation points! This makes any writing look amateurish and fuzzy. If you're saying something that's important, the way you say it should be strong enough so that you don't have to tell your reader that it's important by using exclamation points at the end of your sentences.
2. Don't underline the titles of your papers. The only time there should be underlining in one of your titles is when you use the name of an independently published work, such as a book or magazine.
3. Skip a line after the title in any paper you're giving to someone else to read.
4. Never write “The End” at the end of anything you write for a schooling exercise.
5. Don't try writing humor until you've studied it and really know the difference between being funny and being corny. (Those places in this book where I tried to be funny and was corny will give you an example of what I mean.)
6. Don't skip a line between paragraphs.
7. Always leave a margin at the bottom of each page.
8. Check your papers for clichés before you write the final drafts.

Skill Needs
Mastered Experience

Exercise 5. Survey

Skill Strand: Research and Report

- _____ 1. Writing unbiased questions
- _____ 2. Selecting a representative sample as respondents to a survey
- _____ 3. Taking a survey

Exercise 6. Report

Skill Strand: Research and Report

- _____ 1. Identifying the forces in conflict in a novel
- _____ 2. Describing these forces
- _____ 3. Showing how understanding these forces is important to understanding the book

Exercise 7. Disorder

Skill Strand: Research and Report

- _____ 1. Observing a situation and taking notes
- _____ 2. Describing what has been seen over a period of days
- _____ 3. Writing a formal scientific report

Exercise 8. Interview With A Character

Skill Strand: Research and Report

- _____ 1. Understanding that imaginary characters sometimes do what they want to do
- _____ 2. Writing an interview

Exercise 9. Who Me?

Skill Strand: Creative

- _____ 1. Recognizing that in some stories there are stock or stereotypical characters
- _____ 2. Understanding that some of the characters seen on TV are stock characters
- _____ 3. Creating both stock characters and characters who have individuality

Skill Needs
Mastered Experience

Exercise 10. Choice Of Action

Skill Strand: Creative

- _____ 1. Describing a personal decision a person might have to make by giving that decision to a character
- _____ 2. Putting a character in a situation where the reader can see the character make the decision

Exercise 11. Problems

Skill Strand: Creative

- _____ 1. Constructing an argument between two people
- _____ 2. Punctuating dialogue
- _____ 3. Describing, in a dialogue, characters' major body movements caused by their emotional reactions

Exercise 12. Letter Writing

Skill Strand: Research and Report

- _____ 1. Understanding the principles of business letters
- _____ 2. Formatting of business letters
- _____ 3. Writing business letters

1. BODY CONTROL

Skill Strand: Creative

It may take you six days to learn that:

1. Adults are better than teenagers at controlling their body movements
2. Writers understand this and use it in their writing
3. You can understand this and use it in your writing

PREWRITING

Day One:

As they get older, people learn to control their bodies. This isn't a hard thing to do, but it does take practice. If you practice controlling what your body does, people will think you're older than you really are.

Notice how the younger kids you know move their bodies and that this movement has nothing to do with what they're saying or with what they want. Young kids are always jiggling their feet, playing with pencils, twisting hair, chewing gum, scratching, texting, or just making random movements with fingers, hands, arms or legs. This is okay; we all did this when we were growing up.

Many of the adults in your life can sit quietly for long periods of time and not show signs of nervousness. Most adults don't have to pick at their hands, bite their fingernails or jiggle their feet—they have learned to control themselves.

In this exercise you will create two characters—one who will be able to control body movements and one who will be young enough not to have learned this. I suggest you put these characters in situations similar to the following:

- a mother talking to her daughter about the daughter picking up her room
- a father talking to his son about cleaning the garage
- an adult talking to a child about leaving toys in the yard or bikes in the driveway
- a parent and a child talking about homeschool
- a teenager and her mother talking about how nice it would be for the girl to do the dishes for her little brother without expecting anything in return

-a mother and her daughter waiting for a bus

-a mother and her child waiting in a doctor's office

Once you have chosen a situation, you should try to visualize it. This means that you can run the situation in your mind like a film and “watch” what the two characters do with their bodies.

To help you learn how young people move their bodies in ways that do not help them communicate, watch the kids in your church group or in your youth group. Using this page or one like it, make a list of their random movements. This does not include gestures, one-time scratches, or one-time changes of position.

Random Body Movements

Boy:____ Girl:____ Part of body moved: _____
Pattern of movement: _____

Boy:____ Girl:____ Part of body moved: _____
Pattern of movement: _____

Boy:____ Girl:____ Part of body moved: _____
Pattern of movement: _____

Boy:____ Girl:____ Part of body moved: _____
Pattern of movement: _____

Keep in mind that this exercise is about body control. In order to thoroughly show how the characters move their bodies, you should have each character speak at least 15 times.

You don't have to resolve any conflict or worry about structure in this short piece. Instead, focus on describing how your characters move as they talk to each other.

Below is a *short* piece of this exercise, which you can use as a model. I suggest that you use past tense and a narrative voice in third person. If you haven't studied these elements of point of view, turn to the chart on page 21, which explains how they function.

Held Over

Bill sat at the kitchen table with his math book open in front of him. He could see through the window across the road to the field where the boys were starting the ball game. He picked up his pencil and put a (1) at the top left corner of his paper. Mrs. Grubber was standing at the sink doing the lunch dishes. When she turned and looked at her son, she saw that he was busy with the thumbnail on his left hand.

Mrs. Grubber sat at the table across from Bill and carefully folded her hands

and looked at her son. He looked up at her and noticed that there was a ring of suds on both of her arms. He wiped his own arms of imaginary soap, went back to the nail and began to bounce his right toe off the edge of his chair.

“Bill,” said Mrs. Grubber, “sit still. You have fifteen minutes to wait before you can leave.”

“Sorry, Mom.” He pushed his right toe against his left foot to stop it jumping around and began to pick at an old scab on his left elbow. This was a challenge because he had to twist his arm and pull his skin to see it at all. Just as he got a good look at the scab, he heard his mother clear her throat. He looked up and she was shaking her head. “Sorry, Mom.”

Mrs. Grubber took a large breath and let it out slowly, almost as if she were under the soapy water in the sink, and said, “You can control your body if you try, Bill.”

“I’ll try, Mom,” Bill said with sincerity in his voice, and, after a moment, Bill’s foot began tapping on the leg of the table.

WRITING

Write a short scenario for your piece. It must be in **present tense** and have **no dialogue or details**. It should contain only the **major events**. Read this short example:

Held Over

Bill Grubber has been told by his mother that he must stay and finish his math before he can play ball with his friends. He has to sit at the kitchen table while his mother is doing the dishes. He has a great deal of trouble concentrating. He picks at his hands and elbow. He taps his feet and looks out the window at his friends. His mother sits at the table and tells him that he’s not concentrating and that he should control his body. He tries and fails.

Day Two:

You should make a list of the body movements of the two characters in your piece. You may use this form if it will help:

BODY MOVEMENTS

Character One (young person): _____

Character Two (adult): _____

When your scenario and list of body movements are written, but before you start writing your piece, you should ask your parent to look over your work.

Set your paper up like this example:

	(Your Name)
	(The Date)
(Skip two spaces)	
	(Your Title)
(Skip a line)	
(Even margins all sides)	

Days Three and Four:

Using the scenario you developed, write the piece today. You should plan on having about three pages. When you have a rough draft, you should ask your parent to read it and make suggestions.

Day Five:

Write your second draft and have your parent check it again. When this is done, you should go over your work for spelling and punctuation errors.

Preparation:

You should plan on having your final copy done at the end of day six. Do enough work in the evening so you'll be sure to have your paper done on time.

This paper should be set up the same way as the example is set up on the next page:

RECORD OF PROGRESS

Name: _____ Date: _____

Exercise 1. **BODY CONTROL**

This is the best sentence I wrote this week.

This mistake I made this week and I will not make it next week.

This is the sentence that had this mistake in it.

This is the sentence again showing how I fixed this mistake.

Comments:

2. IF I WERE A . . .

Skill Strand: Research and Report

It may take you eight days to learn that:

1. Some of the things we call good and bad are determined by who we are
2. Some ideas are looked at in more than one way
3. The organization of a report should help the reader understand it

PREWRITING

Days One and Two:

Most of the disagreements between people come about because of differences in the ways they look at things. This is how some people determine what they call good and bad. The music and TV programs you like, your parents may not like. You may like fast food and corny jokes, but your sister or brother may not. These likes and dislikes are based on taste, which is another word for personal preference.

Many beliefs are determined by experiences. If this were not so, we would all believe in the same religions and forms of government. In some places in the world, there are people who try and force their beliefs on other people.

If you and I do not like the same things, it doesn't mean that I think you're wrong; it means that we might have an interesting relationship. It might be very dull if all people thought the same way and liked the same things.

In this exercise, you'll have an opportunity to examine a place where all people think alike, and so they all act the same way. You will be a student explorer on a just-discovered island called Sameland, and you have to write a report for your college teacher about what this land is like.

In Sameland, everyone believes and acts the same, and you have to describe what this is like. This country is much like yours in respect to language, so you're able to understand what the people are saying.

WRITING

Your parent might want to work with you on this paper. If so, you'll learn to share experiences and efforts. This will be good for you because you both have had very different experiences, and this should give you a good understanding, in a new way, of how people are different.

One of the first things you should do when you have to write a report is to make a list of areas you will have to report on. In this case, you should think of what it would be like if everyone liked the same things and had the same beliefs. The list for this report could start this way:

1. Clothing
2. Food
3. Cars

If you work with your parent, you and your parent will have to go on with this list. One way to think about this is for you and your parent to talk about what it would be like to spend a day in Sameland. Think about what you would do and what you would see.

Preparation:

You both can add to your list after dinner when you both have had a bit of time to think about this problem. You can bring your additions in on day three.

Day Three:

Make sure your parent sees the additions to your list near the beginning of this session. While you're waiting, you can write the title and the introduction of this report.

The title should let your reader know that this is a report and give a general idea of its subject. It might read like this:

REPORT TO THE FOREIGN CULTURE DEPARTMENT
on the
EFFECTS OF TASTE RESTRICTION
on a
PEOPLE AND A CULTURE

If you and your parent cannot think of a title for this report, you may use this one, but it'd be better for you to invent your own.

In your introduction you should give your reader the following information:

I) INTRODUCTION

- A) The subject of the report
- B) Who authorized or ordered the report
- C) Why the report was ordered
- D) Who conducted the examination and what their positions are (jobs or ranks)
- E) What it was hoped the examination would show

A schematic (outline) of the complete report might look like this:

I. INTRODUCTION:

- A. Subject of report
- B. Who ordered report
- C. Why report was ordered
- D. Who conducted examination in Sameland
- E. What was expected of this examination

II. CONCLUSIONS:

- A. Major Conclusion
- B. Supportive Conclusions
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

III. SUPPORT FOR SUPPORTIVE CONCLUSIONS:

- A. (1st Supportive Conclusion)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- B. (2nd Supportive Conclusion)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- C. (3rd supportive Conclusion)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

IV. IMPRESSIONS OF INVESTIGATORS:

- A.
- B.
- C.

Preparation:

You're to have ready for day four a rough draft of the title and introduction.

Day Four:

Make sure your parent reads your work early in the session. You're to begin the body of your report. A report should be written so that the people reading it don't have to read more than necessary to get the information they need or want. This means that the conclusions of this type of a report should come first in the body. An outline of the **body** of this report might look like this:

(Roman numeral I will be the introduction.)

II. Conclusions:

- A. Major Conclusion (the one idea or piece of knowledge that is most important which is a result of your study)
- B. Supportive Conclusions (the minor conclusions that led you to your major conclusion)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3. (There may be as many as you wish.)

III. Support for Supportive Conclusions (what you learned that led you to arrive at each Supportive Conclusion):

- A. (1st Supportive Conclusion)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3. (As much support as you wish.)
- B. (2nd Supportive Conclusion)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- C. (3rd supportive Conclusion)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

IV. Impressions of Investigators:

- A.
- B.
- C. (There may be as many as you wish.)

You should write the conclusions for this paper. The major conclusion might be that this land and its people are very dull and uninteresting. Of course, you may not come to this conclusion at all. You must come to your own conclusion. You will want to make a list of the reasons you came to the conclusions that you did. These will be your Supportive Conclusions.

Day Five:

Your parent will read the rough draft of the second section of your report (the conclusions). You should write the support material (section III, what you observed) for the first Supportive Conclusion. These support points will be made from your observations of life in Sameland.

One of the Supportive Conclusions you might have is that everyone wears the same color and style of clothing. In this case, all of the people would be dressed exactly the same way. If the favorite color were gray, all clothing would be gray. Both the men and women might like slacks and pull-over shirts. All people might wear lace-up black shoes. There might be large flowery hats on all people. There might be no styles or chances for individual expression in clothing.

Preparation:

You will have to write the rough draft of this first section of your report for day six, then start the second Supportive Conclusion and have it ready to show your parent.

Day Six:

Show your parent your rough draft of the first Supportive Conclusion. While you're waiting for suggestions, you should work on the next Supportive Conclusion.

Preparation:

Write the second rough draft of the first Supportive Conclusion and then write the second rough draft of the second Supportive Conclusion.

Day Seven:

Have your parent check your work. You're now ready to write the final copy of the introduction and the first Supportive Conclusion. You might start on the third one.

Preparation:

You should write the final copies. You should prepare for day eight the final copy of the introduction and the first and second Supportive Conclusions.

Day Eight:

You should work on the impressions of the investigators. In it you will tell your reader how you feel about the conditions found in Sameland.

Fill out the "Record of Progress" on the next page. I recommend you now take a week off from writing and concentrate on reading and discussing ideas with your parents.

RECORD OF PROGRESS

Name: _____ Date: _____

Exercise 2. IF I WERE A . . .

This is the best paragraph I wrote this week.

This mistake I made this week and I will not make it next week.

This is the sentence that had this mistake in it.

This is the sentence again showing how I fixed this mistake.

Comments:

3. CONFLICT

Skill Strand: Creative

It may take you eight days to learn that:

1. Conflict is one of the things that makes reading stories fun
2. You can create conflict in your writing

PREWRITING

Day One:

Conflict is when there are two or more people or forces that want the same thing or want to keep the other force or forces from doing or getting what they want. Think about the most exciting parts of the books you've read. You'll find that those parts are the ones in which the conflict is most clearly defined.

This same situation is true in stories. People love to read about conflict. In fact, all stories are based on conflict because this is what stories are: incidents in which conflict is resolved.

In this exercise you'll have a chance to create a conflict and its outcome. This exercise has three parts. You will:

1. **Create characters**
2. **Put the characters in opposition** (conflict)
3. **Solve this conflict**

WRITING

You'll have to create at least two characters who will be in conflict. It would be best for you to create characters who are not alike. It would be easier to write the dialogue if one is a girl and one is a boy or one is an adult and one a teenager. Some suggestions might help you choose a situation and create characters:

1. A girl and her brother have to share doing the dinner dishes every night. The girl likes to wash so that she can leave the kitchen sooner. The boy wants to wash so he doesn't have to hurry so much trying to keep up with his sister. They argue.