

## INTRODUCTION

Being able to communicate meaningfully through writing is an essential life skill. As students progress through school, written assignments become more frequent and more complex. Job positions commonly require a significant amount of formal or technical writing. For these reasons it is vital that each student receive a solid foundation in writing instruction.

Once labeled in importance as the second “R,” writing has often been less emphasized than reading and math, even science and social studies. While these other school subjects were easily broken down into specific skills with activities that could be objectively graded, writing skills were much more abstract, hard to grade, and seemingly hard to teach. Recent increased expectations and mandatory testing have renewed an interest in teaching writing. Writing instruction is reemerging with an emphasis in writing across all curriculum areas.

The *Basic Writing Series* is designed for the educator who desires a coherent method for teaching writing. Each activity is presented at a low readability level to support beginning readers and writers. The techniques modeled within this program teach specific repetitive steps and reinforce learned skills with additional practice time. *Basic Writing Series* employs clear instructions, visual cues, repetition, and activities within each learning modality.

## RATIONALE

The philosophy behind the development of *Basic Writing Series* is that writing instruction can, and should, be taught to every learner. This curriculum, through its use of the Think, Organize, Write method, has separated writing instruction into small, specific skills and combined those skills with activities that can be evaluated.

Writing skills can be separated into manageable pieces of instruction and can be compared to the construction of buildings. Buildings are constructed vertically and involve the successful completion of several phases: a strong foundation, a framing support system, walls, and eventually, multiple stories. Each step must be completed successfully before the next phase begins.

The construction and process of writing a paragraph also has phases beginning with a foundation that consists of a readily available bank of words. Provided with repeated experiences in writing words, students are better equipped to select words for specific topics and write clear sentences. Connecting these words into simple sentences provides the writer a primitive framing support system. To transform the simple sentence into a more complex one, special tools and supplies are used to reinforce the existing structure. To create a topic sentence, the addition of a main idea is necessary. Details give support to the main idea through supporting sentences. Finally, thoughtfully constructed sentences can be stacked to build a paragraph. A paragraph is like one story of a building. The completed paragraph must be constructed so that it can stand alone while being connected to the paragraphs which follow it. The *Basic Writing Series* addresses each of these building phases in six units, ordered in developmental progression.

## SIX UNITS

Lessons and activities in this book are presented in six units. Each unit builds on skills from the previous unit. The units are:

Writing Warm-Up	Writing Words
Topics	Topic Sentences
Supporting Details	Paragraph Writing

## UNIT OVERVIEW

While each unit contains teacher instructions, a parent/guardian letter, and activity pages, it also contains components unique to the skills presented within the unit. An overview of the additional components included in each unit is listed below:

### Unit 1: Writing Warm-Up

- Review of capital and lowercase letters
- Introduction of 18 thematic word lists
- Construction of a Word Book

### Unit 2: Writing Words

- Four sets of "I Have, Who Has ...?" game cards
- Two additional thematic word lists to be added to student Word Book

### Unit 3: Topics

- Think, Organize, Write song used to introduce and reinforce three basic steps of the writing process
- Three additional thematic word lists to be added to the student Word Book

### Unit 4: Topic Sentences

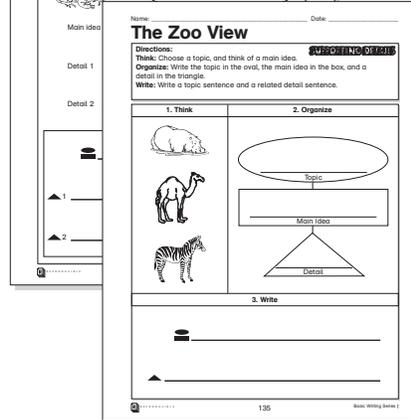
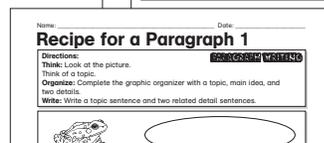
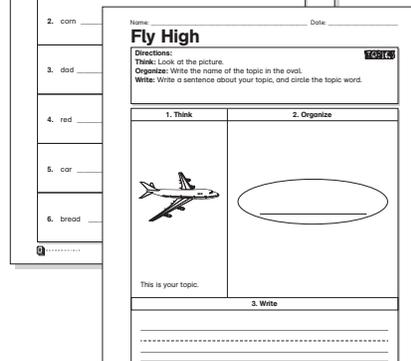
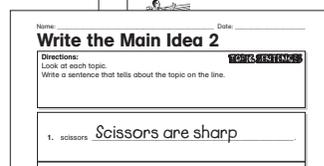
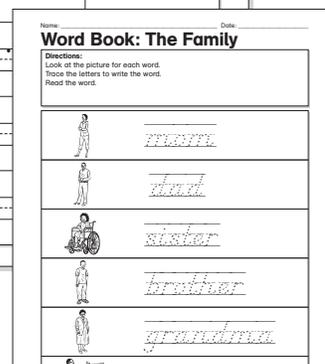
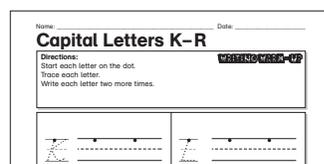
- Two sets of game cards to match topic and main idea
- Talk About the Topic game board and 48 question cards
- A dictionary template for students to add words of their choice to the Word Book
- Two additional thematic word lists to be added to the student Word Book

### Unit 5: Supporting Details

- Instructions for a modified version of the "I Spy" game

### Unit 6: Paragraph Writing

- An introduction to paragraph writing





## ASSESSMENTS

Three types of assessment are included in this book: a progress chart, rubric chart, and student writing checklists for student self-evaluation. None of these assessments require marking on the students' work.

**Progress Chart:** A progress chart (page XIII) is included to track students' progress and mastery of writing skills. One way to use the progress chart is to collect weekly writing samples from each student and quickly check the boxes on the chart to record each of the skills the student used on the sample. Once the student has used the same skill in five successive progress checks, the teacher may mark the skill as mastered. The progress chart is a valuable communication tool to inform parents/guardians of their child's success and keep a record of their strengths and areas needing additional practice.

The form is titled "PROGRESS CHART" and includes fields for "Name" and "Evaluated By". It features a grid with 12 columns for dates and 20 rows for skills. The skills listed are: Grammar Topic, Grammar Topic.

**Rubric Chart:** A rubric chart (page XIV) is included in this book to numerically grade students' writing. While grading a student writing sample, refer to the scoring key to assign each skill a numerical rating of 0–3. To find the final score, add up the ratings and use the scoring scale provided to equate the total score to a grade if desired.

The form is titled "RUBRIC CHART" and includes fields for "Name", "Date", "Evaluated By", "Points", "Maximum", "Score", and "Average". It features a grid with 12 columns for dates and 20 rows for skills. The skills listed are: Grammar Topic, Grammar Topic.

**Scoring Scale**

Adjust score if less than 10 skills are evaluated. Add up the total rubric scores, and use the Scoring Scale to obtain a numerical grade.		
<b>Scoring Scale</b>	16–18 = 60	25–28 = 80
11–14 = 70	19–21 = 65	29–30 = 100
15–16 = 75	22–24 = 90	

**Student Writing Checklists:** Student Writing Checklists (pages XV–XVIII), specific to Units 3–6, are included. The Student Writing Checklists may be utilized in different ways. Each student can use the writing checklist to edit his or her own writing when completing each step of the activity. Visual learners will find the checklist helpful for organization and accuracy. A Student Writing Checklist, specific to the unit being studied, may also be laminated and placed in each student's Word Book as a reference. The last two lines can be filled in with other grammar skills being taught that should be included in the students' writing samples. The Student Writing Checklist will need to be replaced periodically to include newly acquired skills. These checklists can be easily modified by the teacher to individualize instruction by highlighting only a few skills on the checklists for a student to work on or by adding additional skills on the two blank lines provided.

The form is titled "Student Writing Checklist: Unit 3" and includes fields for "Name" and "Date". It features a list of writing steps with checkboxes:

- Put my name on the paper.
- Think of a topic.
- Write the topic in the circle.
- Write a sentence using the topic.
- Begin the sentence with a capital letter.
- End the sentence with a punctuation mark.
- Read the sentence.
- Share the sentence with a partner.

At the bottom, there are two blank lines for additional skills and a page number "XV".

A blank Student Writing Checklist is included on page XIX. Teachers can use the checklist to create an individualized writing checklist specific to the skills the students are currently learning.

## EXPLANATION OF THE THINK, ORGANIZE, WRITE METHOD

The heart of the curriculum is the Think, Organize, Write method which is introduced in Unit 3. The method provides a framework for the writing steps in Units 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Think, Organize, Write is the method of dividing writing skills into smaller, more manageable skills that can be evaluated. The first two steps, Think and Organize, engage students in prewriting activities. Mature writers naturally take time to think and organize their thoughts in a coherent fashion before writing. Novice writers, however, must be taught to do this. The graphic organizer, using the simple geometric shapes of an oval, rectangle, and triangle, provides a way to easily develop prewriting skills. The graphic organizer visually displays each step and becomes so familiar to students that its recognizable geometric shapes are used as visual cues to prompt writing in Units 5 and 6.

The Think, Organize, Write method is introduced in its most rudimentary form in Unit 3. Students learn to look at a picture, think of a writing topic, write the topic in the graphic organizer, and use the topic in a sentence. A simple song is included in the unit to help students master the three basic writing steps. In Unit 4, the method includes the addition of the main idea. Students learn to develop a main idea, graphically organize the main idea, and then combine the main idea and topic to write a topic sentence. The method expands in Unit 5 to reflect the addition of one detail. The triangle is used in the graphic organizer to represent the detail. In this step, the students write a topic sentence and one related detail sentence. The Think, Organize, Write method assimilates all of the steps in Unit 6, teaching students to write a paragraph consisting of a topic sentence and two related detail sentences. The book also includes a Think, Organize, Write template (on page XXI) for teachers who want to use this writing method in additional cross-curricular activities.

The image displays three examples of the Think, Organize, Write graphic organizer worksheets, each with a different theme and corresponding illustrations.

- Groceries for Cooking (Page 70):** This worksheet features illustrations of various grocery items like bread, eggs, and a milk carton. The 'Think' step shows a student selecting a topic from these items. The 'Organize' step uses an oval for the topic and a box for the main idea. The 'Write' step provides lines for writing a topic sentence and a detail sentence.
- More Fruits (Page 141):** This worksheet shows illustrations of different fruits. The 'Think' step involves choosing a fruit as a topic. The 'Organize' step uses an oval for the topic, a box for the main idea, and a triangle for a detail. The 'Write' step includes lines for a topic sentence and a detail sentence.
- Recipe for a Paragraph 5 (Page 154):** This worksheet uses an illustration of a cow. The 'Think' step is looking at the picture. The 'Organize' step uses an oval for the topic, a box for the main idea, and two triangles for two details. The 'Write' step provides lines for a topic sentence and two detail sentences.