

Learning to Write: Wanting to Write

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I do not know what to write. Why is she making us write another paper? I hate writing. It is so boring. Why can't we do something fun? First comes the writing, and then comes the proofreading. Next we will be revising our copies six million times. This is so lame. I want to go to P.E.

Any teacher who teaches the wonderful art of writing has heard this coming from students' lips (usually muttered). Writing has become somewhat of a hated subject for some students. I am a sixth grade teacher. I have taught reading, math, and science for two years in an elementary school, but have not had the pleasure of teaching writing. This coming school year, I will be teaching sixth grade writing in middle school. I have two main objectives in mind for writing: preparing them for the seventh grade test, and inspiring them to want to write. It is my personal belief that the students who want to write will excel with good instruction.

Writing Objectives

There are six objectives for writing. They are the same for grades four through seven. The individual TEKS for each grade, however, vary somewhat. The following are the writing objectives:

- Objective. 1: The student will, within a given context, produce an effective composition for a specific purpose.
- Objective 2: The student will produce a piece of writing that demonstrates a command of the conventions of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure.

- Objective 3: The student will recognize appropriate organization of ideas in written text.
- Objective 4: The student will recognize correct and effective sentence construction in written text.
- Objective 5: The student will recognize standard usage and appropriate word choice in written text.
- Objective 6: The student will proofread for correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling in written text.

Sixth Grade TEKS

Each grade, four through seven, uses the objectives listed above. However, each grade has a different set of TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) to use in order to accomplish each objective. The following are the sixth grade writing TEKS:

- TEK 15 (Purposes): The student writes for a variety of audiences and purposes and in a variety of forms.
- TEK 16 (Penmanship/capitalization/punctuation/spelling): The student composes original texts, applying the conventions of written language such as capitalization, punctuation, penmanship, and spelling to communicate clearly.
- TEK 17 (Grammar/usage): The student applies standard grammar and usage to communicate clearly and effectively in writing.
- TEK 18 (Writing process): The student selects and uses writing processes for self-initiated and assigned writing.
- TEK 19 (Evaluation): The student evaluates his/her own writing and the writings of others.

- TEK 20 (Inquiry/research): The student uses writing as a tool for learning and research.
- TEK 21 (Connections): The student interacts with writers inside and outside the classroom in ways that reflect the practical uses of writing.

While the individual TEKS are important for the classroom, this paper will focus on the objectives and list helpful websites.

Website Resources

- Objective 1 (writing for a purpose):
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/getwriting/Index?submit=new&user=on&type=54&let=all> – This is a good website for teachers. It contains mini-lessons on writing descriptively, using dialogue, writing in different genres, and using different perspectives. Students could also go here on their own if they finish early or want to write at home.
 - [http://www.ttms.org/PDFs/01%20Writing%20Strategy%20Guide%20v001%20\(Full\).pdf](http://www.ttms.org/PDFs/01%20Writing%20Strategy%20Guide%20v001%20(Full).pdf) – This is a download from the website <http://www.ttms.org/index.htm>. It is a teacher resource workbook that has information on what to write, adding details, creating leads, and ending stories. This workbook has some really good ideas that can be adapted for any classroom.
- Objective 2 (writing with conventions):
 - <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/> - This website is a little advanced for sixth grade. However, it is a good resource for teachers. It has information on capitalization, grammar, punctuation, and much more.

Simply pick the topic you want, and a whole page of information opens up. It also has student quizzes on each subject that can be submitted and graded online.

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/grammar/> - This grammar website would be excellent for students to access. There are several aspects of grammar to choose like apostrophes, personal pronouns, and adverbs. There is also a separate tab for spelling. It gives a factsheet, worksheet, game, and quiz for each subject. Teachers could adapt it for the classroom or let students work on it in the computer lab.
- Objective 3 (organization of ideas):
 - <http://www.kimskorner4teachertalk.com/writing/menu.html> - This website is for teachers only. It gives general ideas for teaching writing, the writing process, the modes of writing (descriptive, narrative, persuasive, and expository), the Six Trait Writing Model, and writing across the curriculum. This website contains ideas on how to teach organization of ideas to students.
 - [http://www.ttms.org/PDFs/15%20Organizers%20v001%20\(Full\).pdf](http://www.ttms.org/PDFs/15%20Organizers%20v001%20(Full).pdf) – This is a download from the website <http://www.ttms.org/index.htm>. It is basically a workbook for teachers. There are many ideas and student pages that can be used to help students organize their writing.
- Objective 4 (sentence construction):
 - [http://www.ttms.org/PDFs/03%20Writing%20Samples%20v001%20\(Full\).pdf](http://www.ttms.org/PDFs/03%20Writing%20Samples%20v001%20(Full).pdf) – This is a download from the website

<http://www.ttms.org/index.htm>. It doesn't give ideas for teaching or student worksheets. However, it does give examples of students' writing for all grades. The examples would be good to show to students who are having trouble with their sentence construction and flow of ideas.

- <http://www.writingproject.org/pub/nwpr/quarterly/2003no3/stafford.html> - This link describes a fun activity that can be used in any classroom. Students are challenged to write long, flowing sentences and short sentences. The author contends that it helps get rid of some of the preconceived notions students have about how long a sentence should be.
- Objective 5 (word choice):
 - [http://www.ttms.org/PDFs/17%20All%20Posters%20v001%20\(Full\).pdf](http://www.ttms.org/PDFs/17%20All%20Posters%20v001%20(Full).pdf) – This is a download from the website <http://www.ttms.org/index.htm>. It is a group of posters to remind students about the elements of writing. There are posters about choosing the right words, organization, sentence fluency, and many more. These could be used for a mini-lesson or a review.
- Objective 6 (proofreading):
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/writing/> - This is the same website that was listed above for grammar. However, it does have a writing tab that includes factsheets, worksheets, and a quiz for proofreading. Again, this could be used by individual students or modified for the classroom.

There are some other websites that do not really fit into a category, but could be useful for classroom teachers. The National Writing Project has a list of 30 ideas for teaching writing at <http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwpr/922>. Some specific

ones were listed above. Also the National Writing Project home page is <http://www.writingproject.org/>. It has ideas for writing and other news related to the field. San Angelo has a local writing project call the Pearl of the Concho Writing Project. Its address is http://www.angelo.edu/dept/education/pearl_concho_writing_proj/. This website has information about the summer institute that is provided free of charge every summer. Applications for the institute are on the website.

The internet has many websites devoted to writing. Some are more helpful than others. The important thing is to make sure the writing activities are rich with good instruction and, above all, fun. Fun activities can become boring, but boring activities can also be made into fun ones.