

The purpose of this activity is for the teacher to demonstrate the developmental levels of writing to children. This can help children feel comfortable at their own level and supports their movement to the next. This activity can be used in whole groups or in smaller groups. One would first divide the paper in half horizontally. The purpose of the top half of the paper is to create/write the "picture story". The bottom half is for the "word story". The children should try to write a simple sentence on the bottom half that describes the picture that they draw on the top half. Do not focus on correct spelling. The teachers can write the same sentence to show various levels of print development.

Teachers should model writing at the level just above the writing levels of the children in the group (adjust according to each child's needs, attention spans and writing experience.) Teachers should have children read their sentences to yourself or another adult. If words are not recognizable, take the dictation on the back of the page or on a sticky note. As you read with the children, be sure to demonstrate proper tracking of Left to Right and encourage them to use a period at the end of their sentences.

Please note that this activity would be appropriate for a 4 year old student who has begun to write. This activity would likely be inappropriate for a 3 year old student.

*****Here is an example of a picture story/word story where the full progression of writing development is shown. Included are suggestions of how to discuss the various levels of writing with the children.



Conventional Writing: Write correctly, using uppercase and lower case letters, ending with a period. *"This is how grown-ups write. You can also write it another way using the sounds the letters make..."*

Phonetic Manner: Say the sounds as you write, emphasizing the beginning and ending sounds. Think aloud as you say the word and choose the letters. Use capital and lower case letters with a period. *"If you know some of your letter sounds, you could write your story like this..."*

Semiphonetic Manner: Say the words aloud emphasizing beginning sounds. Write an uppercase letter for each beginning sound. Include a period. *"If you know letters, like the letters in your name, you could write like this..."*

Random Letter Strings: Use letters that you know the children are familiar with and say the letter names as you write the sentence. End the sentence with a period. *"If you are not sure of any letters then you could write your sentence like this..."*

Mock Letters/Scribbles: Say the sentence aloud while writing letter-like squiggles or marks (or just wavy lines horizontally in a scribble). End with a period.

Provide time for children to write freely in journals, as a choice. Encourage children to draw on the top and write on the bottom. It is important for them to know that any kind of writing is OK. Children need opportunities to use their "kid writing" as well as opportunities to dictate stories to adults and to write their names and simple words.