

Writing, Grade 1

Introduction

This course focuses on the progression of young students through the stages of the writing process and the introduction of basic concepts about the purposes and forms of writing. (See Program Appendix in any of the *Teacher's Editions* for a detailed discussion of Writing.) You should consider the course content in the context of the classroom in which first grade students are learning about sounds and spellings and making connections between reading and writing.

Mr. Ohmer's students will choose a person to whom they will write a friendly letter. This will serve as a vehicle for teaching the students the writing process (prewriting/planning, writing/drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing) and allow them to express their ideas about an event in their lives. They will consider their topics, think carefully about the information they need to include, write drafts, revise, proofread, and publish their letters. They will learn to share their ideas and give each other feedback. Most of all, they will learn that the experience of writing is exciting, challenging, and rewarding.

Teaching Example 1

In Teaching Example 1, Jeff Ohmer begins the week's writing lesson by reviewing the types of writing the students have done to this point and introducing the friendly letter. As an underlying structure, Mr. Ohmer uses the writing process, supporting the students as they move through this process to write friendly letters.

After introducing the students to the friendly letter and making sure they understand what it is, Mr. Ohmer and his class brainstorm to whom they might be able to write and what they can write about. This first round of brainstorming involves possible people to whom to write—friends, relatives, teachers, and so on. Later, students will choose a specific person to write to.

Finally, Mr. Ohmer's students think about and choose people to write to and subjects to write about. The students write their lists of possible subjects.

Introduction and Brainstorming

Prewriting is when students think of ideas to write about and plan how they are going to write. Brainstorming—getting ideas—is the first step in the prewriting phase.

In this lesson, students know they will be writing a friendly letter. They brainstorm a list of people to whom to write. Although not the case in this lesson, deciding the genre is typically part of the prewriting stage.

As Mr. Ohmer provides explicit support for the students in this phase of their writing, he:

- Prompts his students to choose someone to write to.
- Explains that they should write to a person who would be interested in what they had to say.
- Helps them limit their choices to one person.
- Helps students think of what they might say to their chosen person.
- Reviews their choices.

In conclusion, Mr. Ohmer tells them that in the next lesson they will continue planning for their writing. Brainstorming and planning, although sometimes time-consuming and seemingly disorganized, is a valuable time that allows students to begin organizing and defining their ideas.

Teaching Example 2

Teaching Example 2 continues the prewriting phase of this writing project. Mr. Ohmer models the process of gathering details for possible inclusion in a letter. Using his nephew as the person to whom he will write, Mr. Ohmer thinks aloud about the topic of his letter. The students are currently reading and discussing stories about people and the jobs they do. In order to show the students how everything they learn ties together, Mr. Ohmer chooses to write to his nephew about his job as a teacher.

After modeling, Mr. Ohmer's students take time to think about what they will write. They use their *Open Court Reading Writer's Workbooks* to help them complete their planning.

Planning

Young, inexperienced writers want to jump in and start writing. Experienced writers, however, have learned the benefits of planning. During this phase of writing, writers think about their topics and what kinds of information they will need. They also think about the genre and intended audience. By approaching writing in a patient and systematic manner, good writers know where they are going. All this makes the writing flow more smoothly and keeps the writer on track.

In this teaching course, the genre of the writing—a friendly letter—has been designated. The students need to choose a subject and make sure they have enough information to write a short friendly letter. Since the goal of the lesson is to teach students about writing friendly letters, most of the instruction revolves around what information they will need.

Teaching Example 3

In Teaching Example 3, students will write the first draft of their friendly letters. Before having the students write, Mr. Ohmer once again models the process using the example he started earlier. As they discuss what his nephew might want to know about his teaching job, some details are included and others are left out.

After clarifying the writing assignment, Mr. Ohmer has his students use their *Writer's Workbooks* to begin writing. As the students write, Mr. Ohmer circulates around the room, conferencing with students, and offering encouragement and suggestions. Finally, as students share what they have written, Mr. Ohmer and the rest of the class offer feedback.

Writing the First Draft

At this stage, the writer has planned and has an idea of what he or she wants to write. The idea is to get his or her ideas on paper without worrying about conventions or correctness.

Mr. Ohmer's students write several details about their subjects. When revising, these ideas may change. For now, the students are just getting all their ideas on paper.

Teaching Example 4

In Teaching Example 4, Mr. Ohmer's students continue to work on their friendly letters by revising their first drafts. Mr. Ohmer introduces the idea of elaboration, and they discuss the importance of including enough details to let their readers get a good mental picture of their subject.

Once again, using his letter to his nephew as a model, Mr. Ohmer elaborates on what he wrote the day before.

Revising

The purpose of revising is to make sure that the writer has expressed his or her ideas clearly and completely. It has been said that there is no good writing, just good rewriting. One distinction between good writers and poor writers is the amount of time and effort they put into revision.

Revising is the step that inexperienced writers most resist. They simply don't want to go back and rewrite, or they are sure that what they wrote the first time is perfect. Helping students develop the habit of revising is critical for them to become good writers.

Teaching Example 5 and Conclusion

Teaching Example 5 addresses the last two phases in the writing process—proofreading and publishing. Once again, Mr. Ohmer models for the students by proofreading his letter. He checks for capital letters, spaces between words, and end punctuation. Because these are young children just learning to write, Mr. Ohmer limits the proofreading to a few key areas. This helps students apply the skills they are currently learning and makes learning manageable.

Once Mr. Ohmer has proofread his friendly letter, the students return to their seats to proofread their own work. Finally, they share their completed friendly letters with each other.

Proofreading

Proofreading is a critical step in writing done by students in *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!*. Students should always proofread their own work. It not only assures that finished writing will be grammatically and mechanically correct, but it also places responsibility for correcting work on the student. Although Mr. Ohmer will help his students in their efforts to correct their work, he makes it clear that proofreading is their responsibility.

Writing that is free of grammatical, spelling, and technical mistakes is clearer and easier for readers to understand. By proofreading their pieces, students also notice which errors they make repeatedly and learn not to make those errors in the future.

Publishing is the process of bringing writing to the reading public. The purpose of writing is communication. Having students present their writing to the public helps them learn about themselves and others, provides an opportunity for them to take pride in their work, and motivates them to write more.

Publishing can be as simple as displaying papers on a bulletin board or as elaborate as creating a class newspaper. Publishing does not need to involve large blocks of class time.

Mr. Ohmer and the students enjoy listening as their classmates read their letters.