

Writing Mini-Lessons

Learning to write one good
sentence, independently



Students in Groups
D, E and F on the WwATC



About these cards:

These cards are designed to support you to implement writing mini-lessons with transitional and conventional writers. They aren't the only things you can do as mini-lessons - but these are designed to give you some structure to get started.

I suggest that you print them and work through them with students. You will probably need to use each card many times as the student develops the skill of writing one good sentence independently. You can add your own lessons in as you become used to the format, based on what your student(s) need.

Beginning writers often write about themselves, their interests and animals - so these cards focus heavily on those areas. Many students also struggle with little words, including pronouns, and also with using a broader range of describing and opinion words - so, again, these are the focus in some of these cards.

And finally, for a student learning to write one good sentence we focus our mini- lessons on ideas, language and spaces. We are not yet targeting end punctuation, or spelling, or capital letters. We still model them in our mini lesson but these are not the focus of instruction just yet. Once the student has finished writing you can say “now let me show you how I would write it” and write their sentence again on the back of theirs or on a post-it note. You would write it correctly, following all conventions, but this is the only intervention we do around spelling, capitals and end punctuation at this stage. Students at this level should be learning phonics and how to spell irregular words at another time in the day, in the working with words block.

As always, have fun writing!

Jane Farrell

The Goal:

The student is learning to a) Compose a message (b) independently (c) that is understood by the intended audience and (d) achieves a meaningful goal.

(Erickson & Koppenhaver, 2013)

And remember:

Sentences are the building blocks of all writing.

(Hochman and Wexler, 2017)

Simple sentences

3 to 6 words, grammatically correct. For example:

I like dogs.

I go to school on Monday.

Addressed in later groups:

Expanded sentences

6 or more words, grammatically correct. For example:

The hyenas were chasing the zebras for hours.

The Swedish chef shouldn't cook popcorn any more.

Complex sentences

A sentence with two or more clauses. Clauses are a group of words in a sentence that have a subject and a verb. There are two types of clauses, independent and dependent clauses. This sentence consists of two clauses: "I went to the shops because we needed milk."

An independent clause is a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence e.g. "I went to the shops". A dependent clause doesn't express a complete thought e.g., "because we needed milk".

Basic Components of Writing Instruction for Transitional and Conventional Writers

Part 1

Mini-lesson
from an adult
(modelled
writing) on an
aspect of
writing

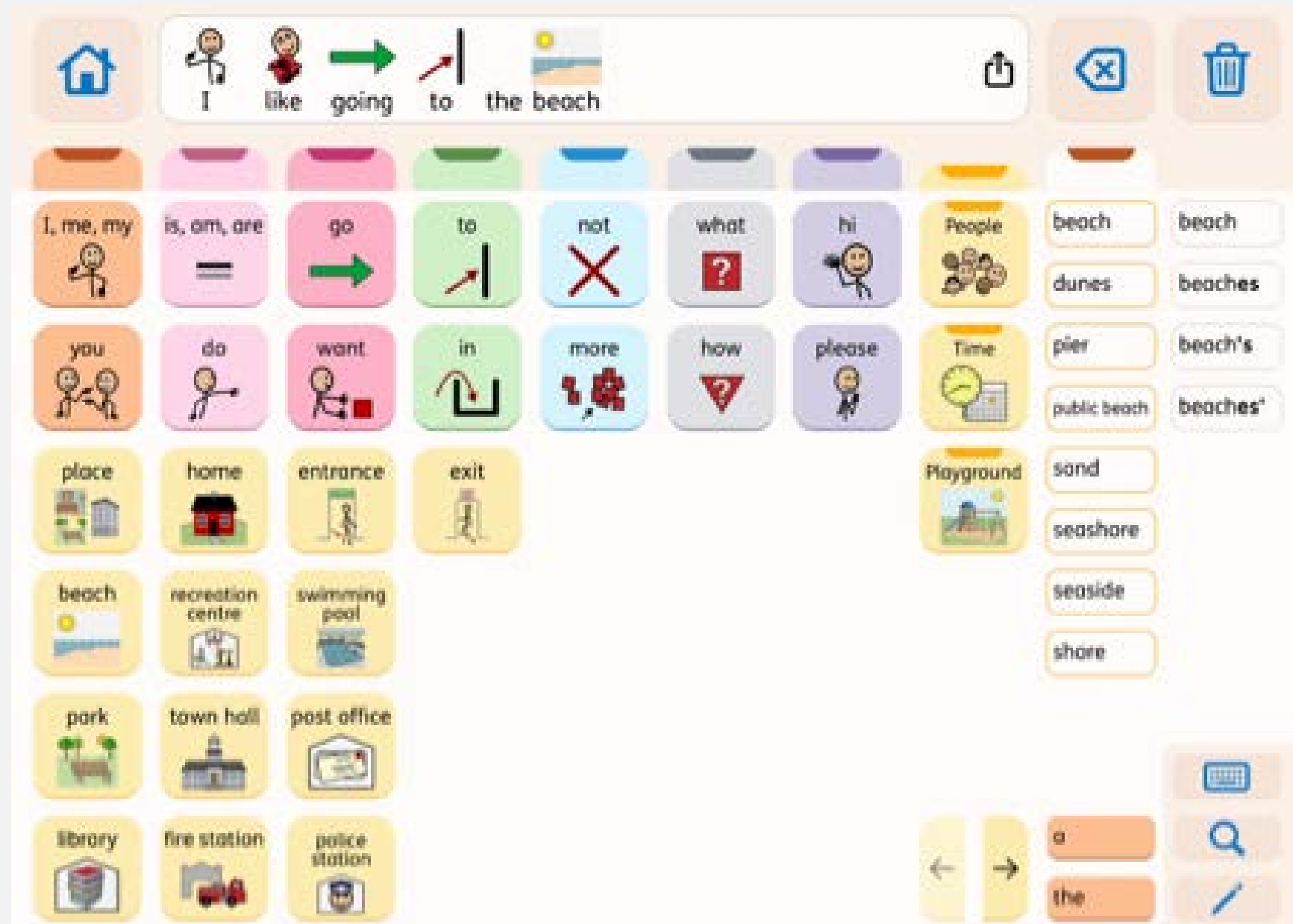
Part 2

Student writes
(Student-
teacher
conference
before student
writes if needed)

Part 3

Teacher-student
conference to review
writing.
Student shares
writing with others at
least once a week.

Remember to use AAC in your “Think Aloud”



Making language visible will help all your students.

For students who struggle to use little words in their writing, and for students who are struggling to generate ideas and language in writing, using AAC to show them language is an invaluable tool - and will reduce their cognitive load.

Writing Mini-Lesson 01

Writing One Simple Sentence: Picture of Yourself, focus on pronoun “I”

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.



I like Easter.

Beginning writers often start sentences with “I” - so you are going to do the same. This means you need a picture of yourself. This will also help students who are struggling with the pronoun “I”.

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic photo and then “think aloud” before you write.
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write “I like Easter” or I could write “I am silly”. Use AAC in your think aloud.
3. Pick one of the simple sentences and write it.
4. Now it is the student's turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.

Proloquo



Writing Mini-Lesson 02

Writing One Simple Sentence: Opinions, focus on likes

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.

This lesson is about writing about things you like. You can use Opinions in your AAC system to select a "like" word.



He is cool.

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic picture and then "think aloud".
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write "Spongebob is funny" or I could write "He is cool".
3. Pick one and write it.
4. Now it is the student's turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.

PODD 60 Expanded in The Grid



Writing Mini-Lesson 03

Writing One Simple Sentence: Opinions, focus on dislikes

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.

This lesson is writing about writing about things you don't like. You can use Opinions in your AAC system to select a "don't like" word.



Brussel Sprouts are gross.

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic picture and then "think aloud".
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write "They are disgusting" or I could write "Brussel Sprouts are gross".
3. Pick one and write it.
4. Now it is the student's turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.

60 Expanded in SimPODD



Groups D, E and F

Writing Mini-Lesson 04

Writing One Simple Sentence: Describing words, focus on looks

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.

This lesson is about writing about things using a describing word for how they look. You can use Descriptions in your AAC system to select a word.

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic picture and then "think aloud".
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write "She is beautiful" or I could write "The pig is dirty".
3. Pick one and write it.
4. Now it is the student's turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.



The pig is dirty.



Writing Mini-Lesson 05

Writing One Simple Sentence: Describing words, focus on tastes

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.



Apple pie is delicious.

This lesson is about writing about things using a describing word for how they taste. You can use Descriptions in your AAC system to select a word. You could have real food to try for this one!

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic picture and then “think aloud”.
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write “Apple pie is delicious” or I could write “It is yummy”.
3. Pick one and write it.
4. Now it is the student’s turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.

Proloquo



Writing Mini-Lesson 06

Writing One Simple Sentence: Modelling how to handle mistakes

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.

This lesson is about modelling how to handle making mistakes. You can actually do this in any mini-lesson, along with another target. This has been very helpful when working with students who think they have to write perfectly all the time.. You will need a helper for this one.



I lik donuts.

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic picture and then “think aloud”
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write “I like doughnuts” or I could write “Doughnuts are yummy”.
3. Pick one and write it. Deliberately struggle with spelling one or two words and make mistakes. If a student interrupts you to tell you that you have made a mistake, respond with “That’s ok - we’ll look at that at the end”.
4. After you have written ask another adult “Can you show me how you would write it”. Take their model positively and say “Thanks.. We’re all learning”

PODD 60 Complex in TDSnap



Groups D, E and F

Writing Mini-Lesson 07

Writing One Simple Sentence: Focus on feelings

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.

This lesson is about writing about things using a feeling. You can use the feelings words in your AAC system to select a word.

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic picture and then "think aloud".
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write "Zombies are scary" or I could write "I think it is bad".
3. Pick one and write it.
4. Now it is the student's turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.



I think it is bad.

Proloquo



Writing Mini-Lesson 08

Writing One Simple Sentence: Describing words, focus on colours

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.

This lesson is about writing about things using a colour. You can use the colour words in your AAC system to select a word. You could use objects or student art for this.

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic picture and then "think aloud".
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write "Red cars go fast" or I could write "I like red cars".
3. Pick one and write it.
4. Now it is the student's turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.



Red cars go fast.

PODD 60 Complex in TD Snap



Writing Mini-Lesson 09

Writing One Simple Sentence: Describing words, focus on shapes

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.



The windows are square.

This lesson is about writing about things using a shape. You can use the shape words in your AAC system to select a word. You could use objects for this one.

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic objects or picture and then "think aloud".
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write "The roof is square" or I could write "The windows are square".
3. Pick one and write it.
4. Now it is the student's turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.



Proloquo

Writing Mini-Lesson 10

Writing One Simple Sentence: Describing words, focus on number

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.



The mum has two girls.

This lesson is about writing about things using a number. You can use the number words in your AAC system to select a word. You could use objects for this one instead of pictures!

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic objects or picture and then "think aloud".
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write "There are three people" or I could write "The mum has two girls".
3. Pick one and write it.
4. Now it is the student's turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.

60 Expanded in SimPODD



Writing Mini-Lesson 11

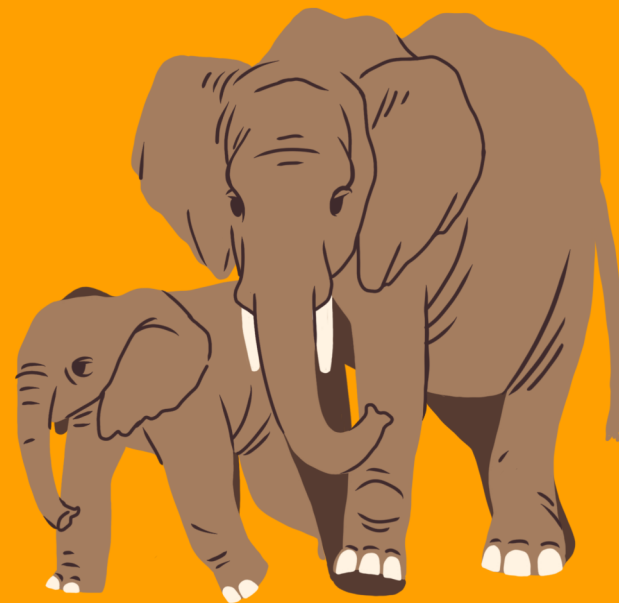
Writing One Simple Sentence: Describing words, focus on size

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.

This lesson is about writing about the size of things. You can use the size words in your AAC system to select a word. You could use objects for this topic too.

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic picture or object and then "think aloud".
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmm, I could write "The baby elephant is small" or I could write "Elephants are big".
3. Pick one and write it.
4. Now it is the student's turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.



Elephants are big.



Proloquo

Writing Mini-Lesson 12

Writing One Simple Sentence: Describing words, focus on feels

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.

This lesson is about writing about the texture or feel of things. You can use the feels words in your AAC system to select a word. Try using real objects, such as sensory toys to make texture real.

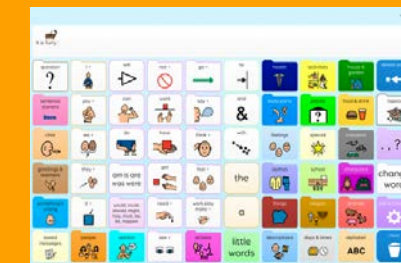
Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic picture and then "think aloud".
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmm, I could write "The rug is soft" or I could write "It is furry".
3. Pick one and write it.
4. Now it is the student's turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.

PODD 60 Complex Syntax in The Grid



It is furry.



Writing Mini-Lesson 13

Writing One Simple Sentence: Describing words, focus on weather

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.



It is very dry.

This lesson is about writing about the weather You can use the weather words in your AAC system to select a word.

Mini-Lesson:

- 1.Show the writing topic picture and then “think aloud”.
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmm, I could write “It is hot” or I could write ”It is very dry”.
- 3.Pick one and write it.
- 4.Now it is the student’s turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.



Writing Mini-Lesson 14

Writing One Simple Sentence: Focus on pronoun “I”: I can

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.



I can shop.

Beginning writers often start sentences with “I” - so you are going to do the same. For “I can” you probably want to use a picture of yourself. This will also help students who are struggling with the pronoun “I”.

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic photo and then “think aloud”.
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write “I can shop” or I could write “I can smile”. Use AAC in your think aloud.
3. Pick one of the simple sentences and write it.
4. Now it is the student’s turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.

PODD 60 Complex Syntax in TDSnap



Writing Mini-Lesson 15

Writing One Simple Sentence: Focus on pronoun “I”: I like

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.



I like roses.

Beginning writers often start sentences with “I” - so you are going to do the same. For “I like” you can use a photo of yourself doing something you like or a photo of something you like.

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic photo and then “think aloud”.
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write “I like flowers” or I could write “I like roses”. Use AAC in your think aloud.
3. Pick one of the simple sentences and write it.
4. Now it is the student’s turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.

Proloquo



Writing Mini-Lesson 16

Writing One Simple Sentence: Focus on pronoun “I”: I went

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.



I went flying

Beginning writers often start sentences with “I” - so you are going to do the same. For “I went” you can use a photo of somewhere you have been!

Mini-Lesson:

1. Show the writing topic photo and then “think aloud”.
2. In your think aloud, talk about a choice of sentences e.g. Hmmmm, I could write “I went flying” or I could write “I went travelling”. Use AAC in your think aloud.
3. Pick one of the simple sentences and write it.
4. Now it is the student’s turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.



Writing Mini-Lesson 17

Writing One Simple Sentence: Helping Generate a Simple Sentence

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.



Pigs can fly.

Beginning writers may struggle to come up with ideas and language, especially when they also have to think about how they would write them. So in this lesson they are going to help you out by giving you ideas and you write one of them up.

Mini-Lesson:

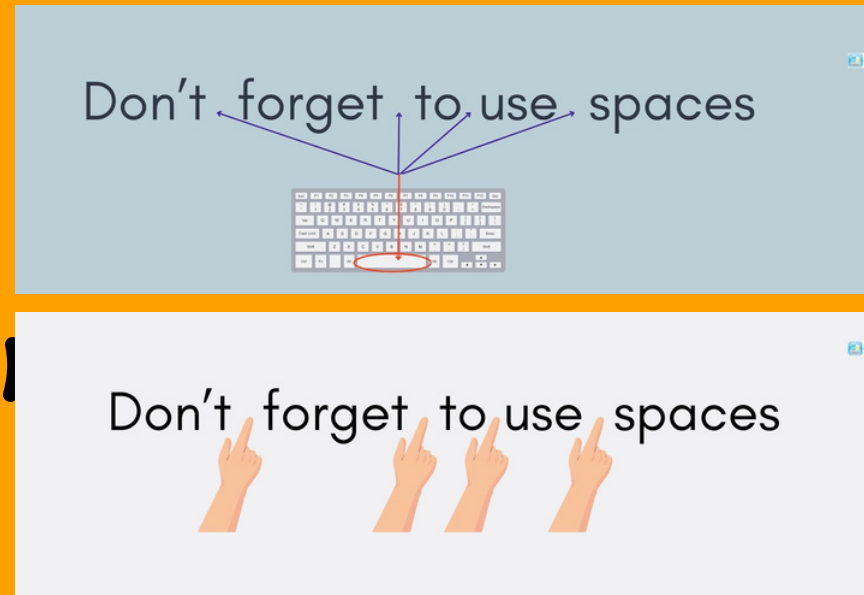
1. Show the writing topic photo and ask the students what they might say.
2. Write down their ideas. If needed, remind them of types of describing words they could use.
3. Pick one of their ideas and turn it into a simple sentences and write it.
4. Now it is the student's turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.



Writing Mini-Lesson 18

Writing One Simple Sentence: Focus on Spaces

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.



The ONLY piece of form we focus on at this stage of writing instruction is spaces. Using spaces helps to make student writing more intelligible. Model writing with different writing tools across the your mini-lessons - and talk about spaces.

Many students drop using spaces when they start thinking more about spelling and language - so we have a mini-lesson focusing on spaces in our sequence to remind them to continue to use them.

Mini-Lesson:

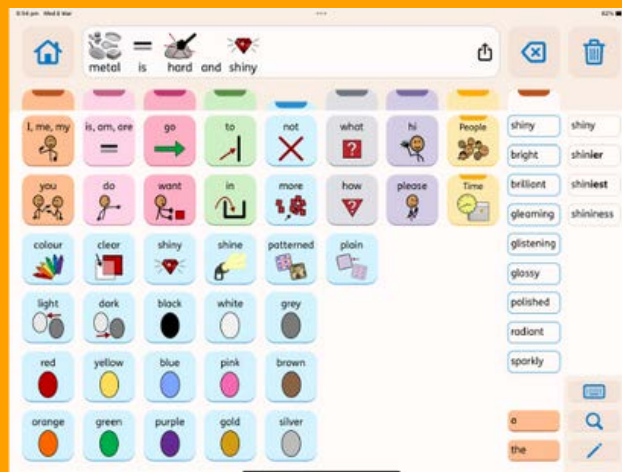
- 1.This one can be used in conjunction with any of the other mini-lessons.
- 2.You can also make sure you emphasise using spaces in any other writing you do.

Writing Mini-Lesson 19

Writing One Simple Sentence: Focus on Curriculum

Writing one simple sentence of 3 to 6 words isn't an easy skill. You may need to model this repeatedly over several months. the best way to do this is to write lots of simple sentences yourself to show them what they are.

I think I'll write about metal. I'll start by describing it.



Additionally, and perhaps obviously, students should be writing in every area of the curriculum. The more practice, the better! However, we don't want the student to be writing at a higher level than they can - so this would be one good sentence too, with additional work completed in other ways as needed.

Mini-Lesson:

1. Set the topic and provide background information, this topic is from Year 4 Science: Materials.
2. Think aloud about which material you will write about e.g. metal or plastic
3. Have pictures of both ready to go.
4. Pick one of the simple sentences and write a simple sentence about it.
5. Now it is the student's turn. They do not have to write a similar sentence - we just need to make sure we model.

Addendum 1: Scaffolds

For every scaffold that we use to support students we need to consider whether the scaffold is going to promote independence and we need to plan to fade it so that the student moves to using the skill independently.

There are many “scaffolds” that people want to use that have been shown to NOT lead to independence. For example, spelling words out for students or generating the language for them. We don’t ever want to do these as they promote dependence on us and don’t lead to skill development for the student.

The scaffolds we do use at this level are ones which lead to independence - but we also need to make sure we have at least one day a week where the student writes without the scaffold so we can see their progress and see when we need to reduce the use of the scaffold.

In addition to the scaffolds there are phrases and support we can use which help students to develop a positive view of themselves as a writer. For example, we constantly encourage them to “have a go” and “write down the sounds you can hear”. We praise them a lot. We don’t correct their spelling, other than to say “Let me show you how I would write it”.

Scaffolds for Groups D, E and F

Addendum 1 Page 1

Addendum 1: Scaffolds

Scaffold 1: Co-Constructing Language

Students who are transitioning to conventional writing may need a scaffold to help them generate the language for a simple sentence.

An evidence based scaffold for this is where the student begins by generating some language - and then we can add 1 or 2 more words to the language that the student has generated.

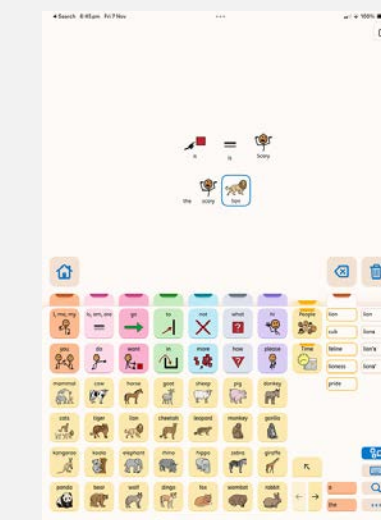
For example, using AAC the student expresses an opinion “scary”. We might then say “tell me more”, giving them the opportunity to expand. If they don’t add another word then we would take the original word and show the student how we could turn it into a simple sentence or a sentence fragment. For example “It is scary” or “The scary lion”. If they do add another word, then we can incorporate that too.

Use AAC to model the co-construction visually.

If you provide the student with two options, then you get the opportunity to model more language and they can have a choice of which option to write - or to come up with another option of their own!

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Scaffolds for Groups D, E and F Addendum 1 Page 2



Handout on co-construction

WRITING WITH
ALL TOOLS
CONTINUUM



Addendum 1: Scaffolds

Scaffold 2: Supporting Students to To Apply Letter-Sound Knowledge Word-by-Word

Students who are transitioning to conventional writing may need a scaffold to help them to apply their letter-sound knowledge to their writing.

We can do this by giving them a visual of a line per word for their sentence. You would make the lines different lengths to give the student an extra cue of how many letters they might need.

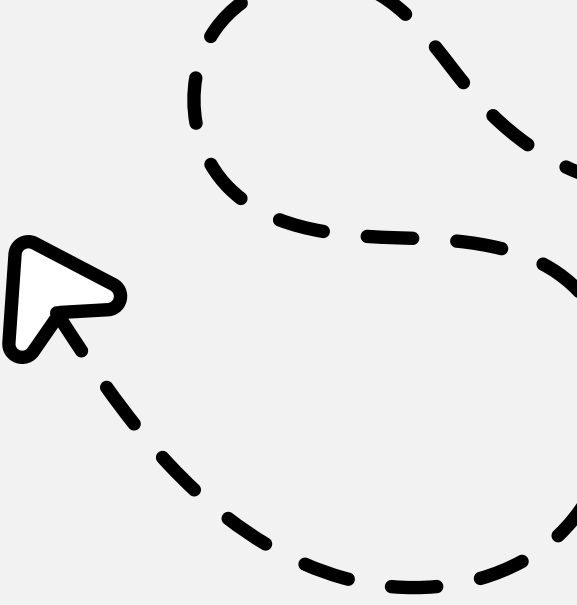
Start by establishing the intended sentence or sentence fragment from the student. Then draw a line per word as a visual. You can do this on a piece of paper or a whiteboard - and then you can transcribe the letters that the student generates onto the lines.



The scary lion.

Scaffolds for Groups D, E and F
Addendum 1 Page 3

Addendum 2: Little Words

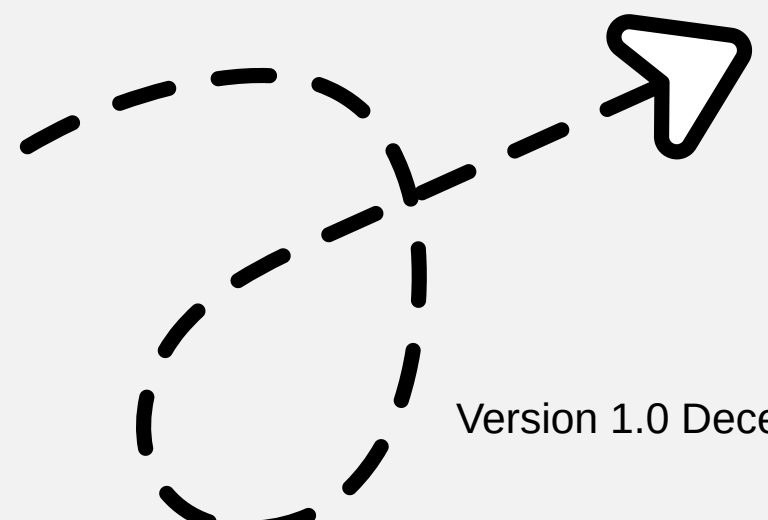


For some of the students we work with, including little words in their writing presents a challenge. Many student use very few little words in their communication (AAC or speech), or use them incorrectly.

Little words occur frequently in spoken and written English. We use them to define nouns and to create more complex sentences. Every English language learner needs to learn little words - even if they don't appear to have meaning - to speak or write grammatically correct sentences.

We can support all students by making little words visible and modelling them in AAC. We can also focus on them during vocabulary instruction sessions and then generalise their use across the week.

Little words consist of articles, conjunctions and prepositions. A list of common ones appears on the next page. Articles can be particularly challenging for some students as they don't often have a clear reason for being used.

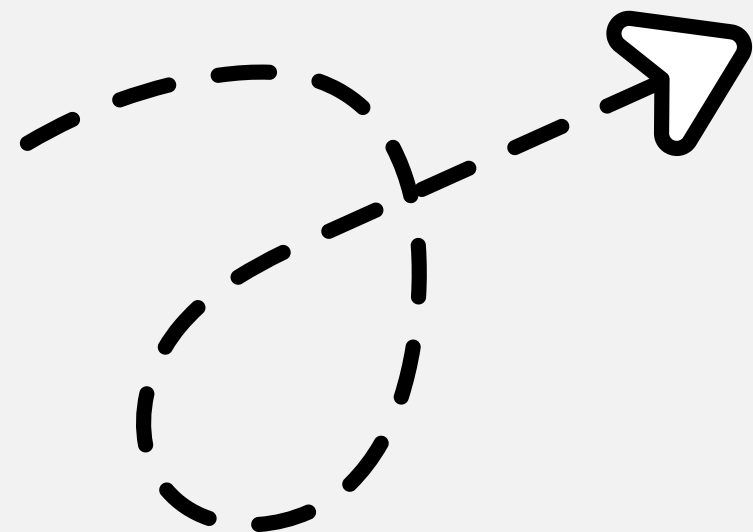


Little Words for Groups D, E and F
Addendum 2 Page 1

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Addendum 2: Common Little Words

Articles						
the	a		an			
Conjunctions						
and	but	or	for	so	because	
Prepositions						
to	at	by	of	from	in	on



Little Words for Groups D, E and F
Addendum 2 Page 2

Addendum 2: Little Words

You should plan to target three words per week in your vocabulary instruction. One or more of these can be little words.

Vocabulary Card for:

the

Definition: A word used before someone or something to refer to it.

Location: PODD: If your PODD has a little words category, it will be there.

Proloquo: Home page > (Orange tab) > the

Sentences: The dog is big.
We went to the shops.

Pictures:



Vocabulary Card for:

because

Definition: A word used to show the reason for something.

Location: PODD: If your PODD has a little words category, it will be there.

Proloquo: Home page > (orange tab) > because

Sentences: I want a new game because I am bored.
We will play inside today because it is raining.

Pictures:



Vocabulary Card for:

for

Definition 4: A word used to show that something has a specific use.

Location: PODD: If your PODD has a little words category, it will be there.

Proloquo: Home page > (green tab) > for

Sentences: The mug is for coffee.
The console is for games.

Pictures:



Little Words for Groups D, E and F
Addendum 2 Page 3

Addendum 3: Teaching About Sentences

Here are some other ideas for teaching students about sentences.

- 1. Have students practice sentence-level activities with AAC/orally as well as in writing. For example: “Tell me one good sentence about chocolate” or “Look at the sentences we’ve been using in Predictable chart writing. Pick one and use it to tell me about your favourite sport”.
- 2. Ask students to practice identifying complete sentences and partial sentences. Start with single sentences, then embed partial sentences in paragraphs. (Hochman & Wexler, 2017). You can also start by doing this verbally and then move to written sentences.

Which sentences are complete?

Dogs crazy.
The cats are funny.
I like chocolate.
The two went.
Like football.

Laugh joke.
I want a hamburger.
I went to school today.
I music.
We went to the park.

I love write.
I am going home.
I like my friends.
My favourite activity is sleeping!

Teaching about Sentences for Groups D, E and F
Addendum 3 Page 1

Addendum 3: Teaching About Sentences

Here are some other ideas for teaching students about sentences (continued).

3. Ask students to correct partical sentences by supplying missing words.

Fill the Gap

I ____ to school.
I don't ____ rugby.
I ____ smile.
We ____ friends.
You can ____ to sleep.

went like can are go

4. Ask students to unscramble scrambled sentences.

played I rugby.
won game We the.
tries scored three We.
best team we are The.

Teaching about Sentences for Groups D, E and F
Addendum 3 Page 2