



Right or Write?

Teaching Language Arts and Grammar



by Odelia Chan

Writing and reading doesn't have to be a struggle. With these ideas—and ones these may have sparked for you—you and your child can enjoy teaching and learning to write well!

Communicating well is a vital skill for young minds to develop. However, learning to write well with proper punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure can be frustrating and difficult for both parents and children.

Below are tips, ideas, and creative strategies to make writing and reading more enjoyable for everyone. These ideas have been tested in real life—in my mother's classroom with my siblings and myself, and with the students I've tutored. Pick a couple strategies to implement in your next homeschooling session!

Ideas to Make Learning Fun

Jigsaw Sentences: Print simple words onto small rectangular pieces of paper. Make sure to have a mix of verbs and nouns, as well as commonly used words like "is" "and" or "that." To make this game more exciting, include words from your child's favorite activities and interests, such as "dog" or "run" or "ball." Then, spend time putting words together to form sentences. You may be surprised by the imagination of your child!

Story Starters: Have you ever given your student a writing assignment, only to have them tell you they don't know what to write? Sometimes they need something to get their creative juices flowing—and story

starters, or essay prompts, may be just what they need. These starters or prompts give the beginning of a fiction story or present a question that your student must or answer with an essay. There are many story ideas, story starters, or essay prompts to be found online on just about any topic or genre.

Board Games: Classis games like Scrabble® can help with spelling and vocabulary. Pictionary® is primarily a drawing game, but it teaches the players to think through situations and handle words. Password® can help them hone analytical skills. Many other conventional games can be turned into "writing games" with a bit of ingenuity and practice!



Idea Notebooks: Have your child keep a notebook of things they are interested in learning more about; then, once a week, have them write a piece on that topic. Remember to suit the difficulty and topic choice of this writing exercise to your student's age.

Tips on Teaching

- Instead of marking up your child's first draft with a red pen, go over the piece with a highlighter, marking things they did right and filling the page with positive comments. Even if it's just a difficult word spelled correctly, or improved handwriting! Your child will see what's not perfect with their work—without you telling them—and they will fix the non-highlighted areas. As they work through second and third drafts, begin to be specific about what needs improvement.
- Have them read their work out loud or read the pieces to them. Sometimes, hearing their own words shows them where their grammar sounds funny, or where they

meant to use another word, or if the idea is making sense on paper or not.

- Publish your child's writing. Share it with family and friends. There are many writing contests online, some of which are free. Knowing that others are reading their work serves to motivate and encourage students to keep writing, and to keep improving.
- Don't demand perfection. Ask questions to show your interest instead. Show that you're engaging with their work. Don't focus on their shortcomings. Look for the words they spell right, or the bits of insights they share.

Some Closing Notes

Bible Verse Copying: This exercise strengthens both spiritual and mental muscles. By copying the verses word-for-word by hand, the student learns grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. Books other than the Bible may be used, but be careful what material your child copies, as this exercise makes words stick onto the

child's mind for good.

Special Needs Children: Treat them as you would a "typical" child—except that you might have to repeat the same process dozens or even hundreds of times before it cements into their minds. While there might not be much feedback from your special needs child, focus on your input. What are you exposing him to? Consider playing audio tapes of good books they can understand or reading stories with pictures together.

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About Odelia

Odelia Chan is a singer, teacher, writer, and avid reader. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Communications and is also a Certified Holistic Nutritionist. She enjoys making music, gardening, practicing martial arts, and spending time with her family.

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