

Teaching Young Learners

The writing process adapted for young learners EFL

Barbara Hoskins Sakamoto

2-step writing process for emergent EFL writers

Prewriting

Getting ready to write

Goal: Build a strong foundation of oral English, generate ideas
Traits: voice, ideas

Activities: oral activities, freewriting, story cubes, story prompts, mentor texts

Drafting

Get your words down on paper

Goal: Become comfortable writing in English

Traits: voice, ideas, organization, word choice

Activities: rereading, storytelling, spelling strategies, sketching, language experience, strategic L1

Additional steps for transitional/fluent EFL writers

Publishing

Share with an audience

Goal: Understand that we write for an audience

Activities: blogs, digital picture books, comics

Editing

Fix sentences and spelling

Goal: Realize that ideas come first, but grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation help others understand our ideas
Traits: conventions

Activities: spelling, grammar, sentence structure games, identify and correct mistakes in sentences

Sharing

What do you mean?

Goal: Become comfortable giving feedback

Activities: questioning, peer editing, analyzing mentor texts

Revising

Add and reorganize details

Goal: Understand that writing is a process

Traits: voice, ideas, organization, word choice, sentence fluency

Activities: graphic organizers, cut and move, +1 details

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The 6 Traits of Writing, applied to children learning to write in English as a foreign language

Writing Stages Traits	Emergent	Transitional	Fluent
Ideas	Drawings as writing Meaning requires explanation	Drawing supports meaning Basic details in text May need explanation to clarify	Clear, coherent idea(s) Includes interesting details Text communicates meaning
Organization	Random words or sentences No obvious order	Attempts to order ideas (beginning, middle, end) Attempts basic transitions (and, but)	Logical order with clear beginning, middle, and end Details support ideas Uses a variety of transitions
Voice	No obvious connection to writer	Touches of originality, but stays within the familiar No connection to audience	Voice matches purpose of writing Awareness of audience Takes risks with new words and structures
Word Choice	Unable to describe ideas in English	Basic vocabulary Limits choice to familiar words	Active verbs Tries new words if familiar words aren't adequate
Sentence Fluency	No sense of word order or sentence structure	Basic sentences, but not always complete (missing verbs, wrong verb endings) Usually consistent word order	Variety of sentence types Some complex structures Connectors
Conventions	Top to bottom, left to right Inconsistent (or no) use of capitals and punctuation Inconsistent use of spaces Some correct consonants in words	Invented spelling Sentences begin with capitals Spaces between words Periods at end of sentences Basic sight words Inconsistent vowels	Capitals at start of sentence and proper nouns Variety of punctuation to support meaning Correct or close spelling of familiar words Tries more advanced punctuation and spelling

Additional reading:

The 6+1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide for the Primary Grades, by Ruth Culham (Scholastic, 2005)

Reading, Writing, and Learning in ESL: A Resource Book for K-12 Teachers, by Suzanne F. Peregoy and Owen F. Boyle (Allyn & Bacon, 2008)