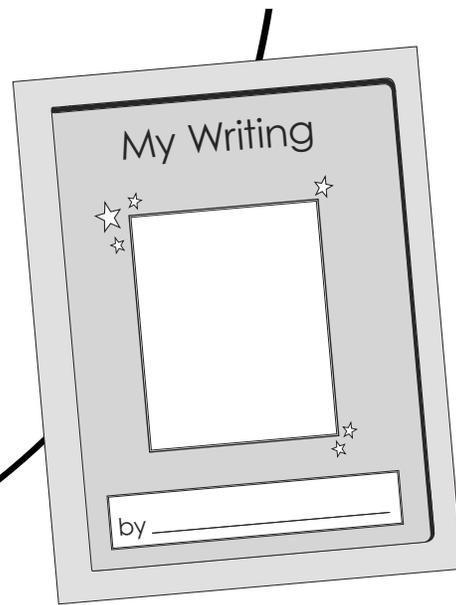


# MY WRITING

## Teacher's Guide

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### INTRODUCTION

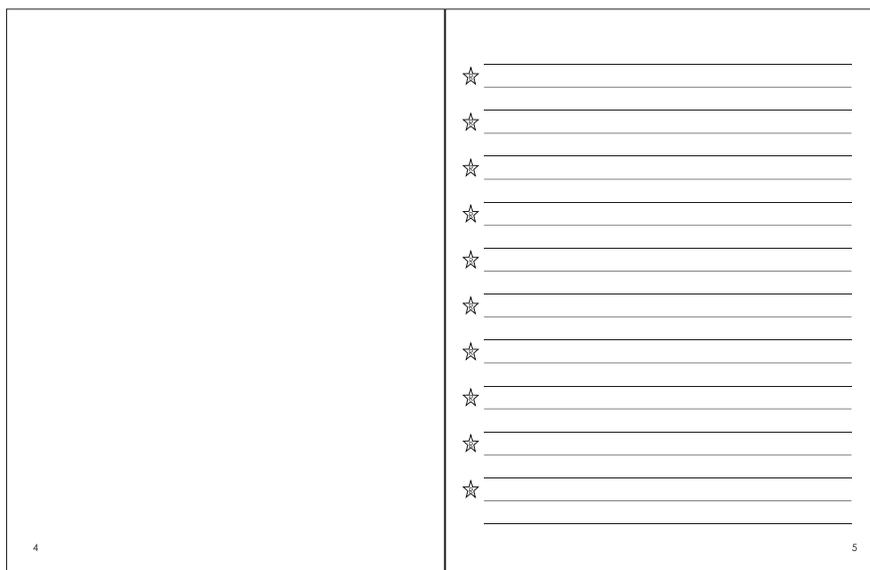
After many years of teaching writing, we developed *My Writing* as a resource to help students use the writing process more effectively. This book provides a unique combination of features that help students develop and improve their writing, such as:

- specially marked **revision lines** above the writing lines, which provide adequate space for students (and their teachers) to improve and correct their writing
- a **spelling list** on the inside front cover and a **word bank** for new words on the inside back cover, which enable students to check and improve their spelling quickly and easily
- a **personalized thesaurus** page that helps students replace over-used words with synonyms, expanding the students' vocabulary and making their writing more interesting
- a **personalized editing guide** that focuses students on key aspects of punctuation and grammar, highlighting their accomplishments and supporting continued improvement
- the blank pages that face the writing pages and provide a **multi-use space** for illustrations, graphic organizers, extended additions, and supports for the writing process.

Through the use of these and other features in the book, we believe your students will find the process of developing and improving their writing faster and easier. In particular, the following benefits will be among the results of using this book:

- effective development and practice of writing skills
- increased use of the conventions of written language
- growth of authorship, pride, and confidence
- progress over time that is clearly demonstrated and available for review.

In thinking about the students, we wanted *My Writing* to support them in expressing their thoughts and ideas as well as assist them in gaining confidence and competence in the craft of writing. Learning to write about their lives and their world is a powerful but challenging experience for students, and helping students find their writing voices and see the impact of their writing upon others is one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching writing. We invite you to assist them in capturing their thoughts, dreams, observations, wonders, ponderings, wisdom, and poems on these pages.



**Figure 1: Planning and Writing Two-page Spread**

Of course, *My Writing* also supports the types of writing students need to develop in order to meet state standards. Depending on your curriculum and students' needs, the book can be used for:

- observations and experiences, both personal and scientific
- other informational writing
- short fiction
- responses to prompts and to text.

For you, the teacher, we wanted to make writing instruction easier, more manageable, and more successful. We see *My Writing* as a helpful and flexible tool to be used in the manner that best fits your teaching style and instructional goals. We also wanted to make formative assessment of students' writing an easier, faster, and more complete process. Having the students' writing preserved in a single volume, along with the personal supports they developed to help themselves, provides you with a wealth of information that can guide your instruction and also demonstrate what the students and your instruction have accomplished.

Now, let's take a closer look at the book's key features and how you can introduce them to your students.

### **INTRODUCING *MY WRITING* TO YOUR STUDENTS**

You may introduce *My Writing* to students in a small group seated around a table or to the entire class. To begin, you will want to demonstrate the use of *My Writing*. Some teachers have photocopied a two-page unit (Figure 1) and enlarged it to chart size for demonstration purposes. The teacher then talks aloud and also writes to help students understand: a) how writers think and b) how to use *My Writing* effectively. Here's an example.

**Teacher:** Let's talk together about what I observed on my walk yesterday along the beach. I am thinking about writing a poem because it was a beautiful sunset.

**Ben:** Did you see any dolphins yesterday, Mrs. Moeller?

**Teacher:** Yes, I did, Ben, and to remember that idea, I'll just quickly sketch my dolphins right here. Do you see this blank page? That's where I put my sketches.

The teacher will continue to talk to students about thoughts and ideas for writing and how to use sketching as a basis for planning. If students are ready for more advanced planning of their writing, the teacher can think aloud and talk with the students as she creates a list, web, or Venn diagram.

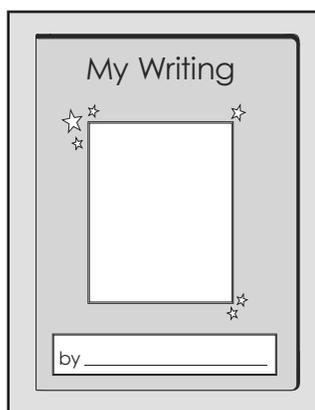
On another day, the teacher will pull the students together to introduce the use of the drafting and composing pages.

**Teacher:** Today, I’ll use the plan I made yesterday to write. I’ll be writing on the right-hand side of the book, and I’ll use just the bold lines for my drafting. See these lines with the star and the R? Those lines are for me to make my revisions and corrections on. So now, I’ll draft my introduction [teacher begins to write].

**Ricardo:** Mrs. Moeller! You misspelled *trouble!* Look!

**Teacher:** Thank you so much for catching that. Watch what I do now. I will not erase. I’ll just put a line through it and write it correctly on the line above. See how handy those lines with the Rs are? They give us space to fix our mistakes and make other changes. Remember that I want to see what you wrote first, and that’s why I ask that you not erase.

When introducing other parts of *My Writing*, you can model the use of those pages in the same manner. With that in mind, let’s take a quick walk through the book and look at its important features.

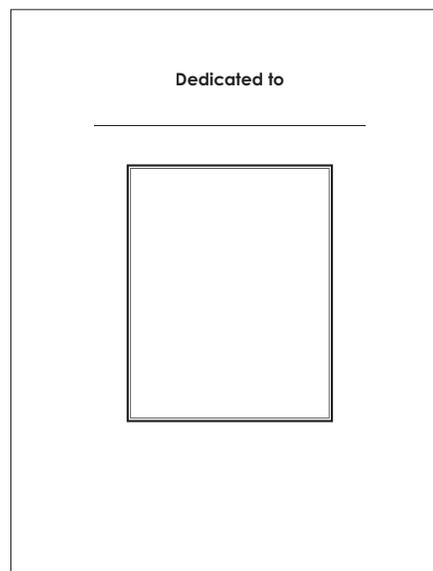


### KEY PARTS OF MY WRITING

The cover is designed to help students express their individuality as well as develop a sense of ownership. In addition to writing their names, students will create their own illustrations inside the frame, or they can paste a photo there.

Words I Can Spell				
<b>A</b> above across after again along already also always another around	<b>F</b> family few find first found friend from	<b>L</b> lough left let like little long	<b>R</b> read ride right round run	<b>V</b> very <b>W</b> want was we'll went were what when where which while who with work would write
<b>B</b> because before best better bring but	<b>G</b> get give goes going got great guess	<b>M</b> made make many Miss more most mother Mr. Mrs. Ms.	<b>S</b> said saw say school shall she should some soon store sure	<b>X</b>
<b>C</b> came caught children come could	<b>H</b> had have heard help her here him home house	<b>N</b> name never nothing now their them there	<b>T</b> take than thank that now their them there	<b>Y</b> year yes you your
<b>D</b>		<b>O</b> off		

On the inside front cover, “Words I Can Spell” provides a quick and easy way for students to increase their proficiency with high frequency words—while they are actually engaged in the writing process. Start by encouraging students to use this page as a tool for independent proofreading and correcting words they have misspelled in the book. Over time, you can start holding them accountable for the correct spelling of the words. For some, this page will also serve as a miniature word wall that helps them build their vocabulary.



The **dedication page** enables students to dedicate their writing to a significant person in their lives, just like grown-up authors do. The students can also create their own art or put a photo in the frame below to add more meaning and personalize the page further.

## My Writing

Table of Contents		
Title	Genre	Page
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

The do-it-yourself **table of contents** provides a number of benefits. Learning to create and use a table of contents is a life-long skill, and many state assessments now include questions about the purpose and use of a table of contents. Creating and using this one helps students develop their understanding and skills as well as ask self-assessment questions such as:

- How will my title capture the essence of my piece?
- What genre am I writing in?
- Am I always writing in the same genre? Is it time to branch out?

(You may also want to add columns in the left and right margins with the headings “Date Begun” and “Date Ended” as a way of supporting students who need encouragement to finish their writing in a timely manner.)

The **blank pages** in *My Writing* meet a variety of writers’ needs by providing space for illustrations, graphic organizers, practice sessions, lengthy revisions, and “teachable moments.” These pages also give students the opportunity to compile material and supports for content area writing in science, social studies, and mathematics. In this and other ways, *My Writing* was created with flexibility so it can be used throughout the school day for all forms of writing from personal narrative to math word problems.



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The **writing pages** provide lines for students’ writing as well as for revisions that can be made on lines designated by the “R in the star.” By simply putting a line through words that are being corrected or revised and then writing the correction or revision directly above, the students have more space to work with and can monitor their own progress, as can their teacher.

My Editing Guide	
I know how to use:	
a period at the end of a sentence	page _____
example _____	_____

**My Editing Guide** provides another handy reference for students to use while editing their work. It also enables them to document their own progress and meet important standards as well as highlight their achievements. These pages can also help you monitor your students’ progress and inform your instruction.

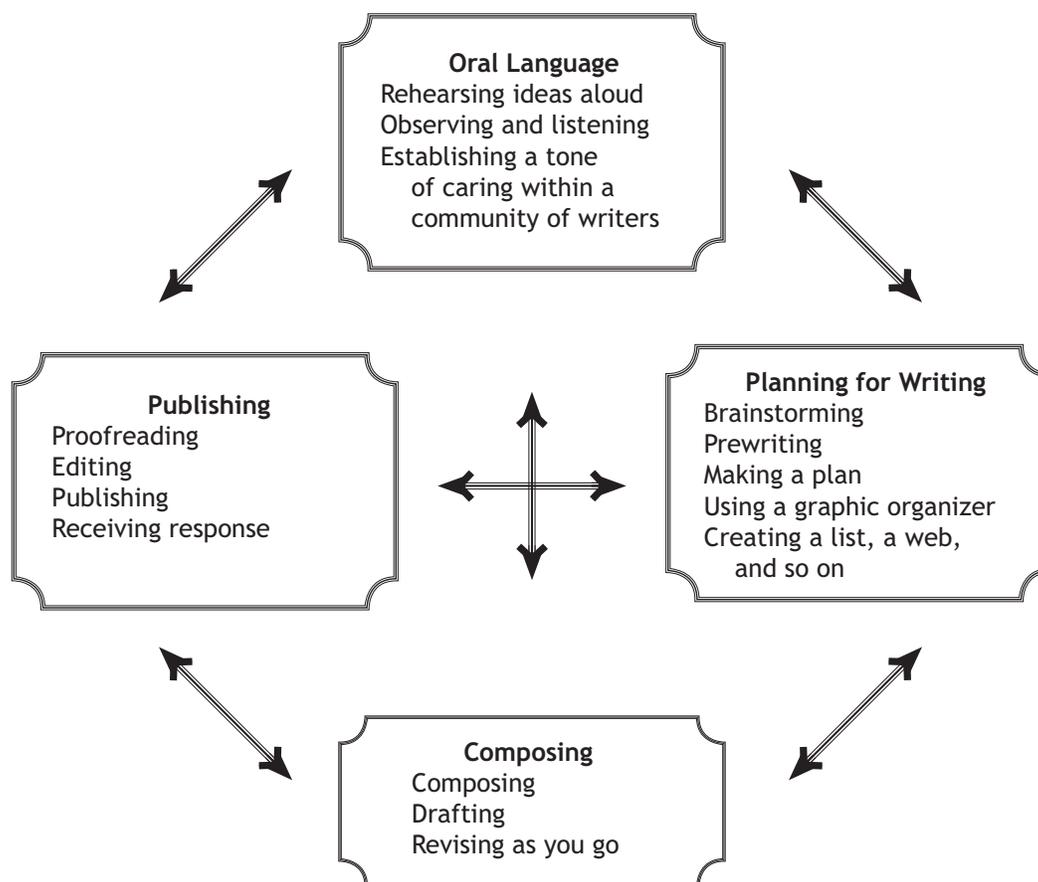
My Word Choices		
_____ said _____	_____ little _____	_____
called _____	tiny _____	_____
cried _____	small _____	_____

**My Word Choices** helps students improve their vocabulary and the richness of their writing. After identifying over-used or uninteresting words during their editing or their conferences with you, they can write the original word in the line at the top of the box and then brainstorm synonyms or use a thesaurus to find new words that will then be available for reference.

New Words I Can Spell		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

The **inside back cover** provides a word bank entitled “New Words I Can Spell” where students can collect and refer to new spelling words that are not included in the high-frequency word list on the inside front cover. Words misspelled on the pages of *My Writing* should be spelled correctly here, along with new words from vocabulary and spelling lessons as well as other sources.

The **About the Author** section on the back cover provides space for a self-portrait or photo plus a brief autobiography or promotional “blurb.” Students can decide how they want to present themselves as authors and also examine book jackets to see how other authors describe themselves and how publishing companies promote authors.



Writers do not work in a lock-step sequence. Note how the arrows move in a variety of directions to illustrate how writers use the writing process at their own point of need.

**Figure 2: The Writing Process**

## USING MY WRITING TO SUPPORT THE WRITING PROCESS

### Integrating *My Writing* with Your Curriculum

A key consideration is the amount of writing that will take place in your classroom during the school year. *My Writing* has thirty-six two-page units for writing; so if your students write in the book once a week, then one book for the year will be sufficient. To plan for the number of books you might need, consider the following table:

One piece of writing per week	One book per student
Two pieces of writing per week	Two to three books per student
Daily writing instruction	Three to four books per student

Our advice is that students may not compose and draft every day, but they should be involved in the writing process every day. For example, they may be conferring about writing, brainstorming topics, reading a piece aloud to a friend, or researching additional information. Ideally, students will write every day, but not all of their writing needs to take place in *My Writing*.

### *My Writing* and the Writing Process

To make the best use of *My Writing* and the writing process, students need guidance and support. With the teacher taking an active role, students grow increasingly skillful and competent. In contrast, we have found that when students do “journal writing” every day without

## My Writing

appropriate guidance and explicit instruction, they may become bored and disengaged, and their writing can erode into long lists of everything they have ever done. Donald Graves has described this as “bed to bed” writing, which typically lacks a clear purpose, focus, and audience (Graves 1994, 68).

Through effective instruction and the use of the writing process, students learn how to write clearly, communicate effectively, and engage the reader. The writing process diagram in Figure 2 shows the various steps a writer uses. As writers do not work in a lock-step sequence, note how the arrows move in a variety of directions.

Now, let’s look at how *My Writing* supports the different steps in the process.

### Using *My Writing* with Oral Language

According to Donald Graves, “the first entry into writing is simple conversation” (Graves 1994, 49). Students develop and rehearse their ideas aloud before putting pen or pencil to the paper. Oral rehearsal can help students organize their thoughts and express what they want to communicate. The blank pages facing the writing pages enable students to record their learning from discussions, oral descriptions, and think-alouds, so this material remains readily available to refer to while planning and writing.

Also, we strongly recommend using pre-writing conferences to “frontload” your students, with information from these conferences recorded on the blank pages for future reference. This can help students focus on their topic and organize what they will write about it. Oral rehearsal from the beginning will also help students know what they want to say and how to go about organizing their thoughts.

### Planning with *My Writing*

Planning to write is a crucial part of effective communication. The blank left-hand pages support this

process by providing space for:

- brainstorming
- outlines
- sketches, drawing, and other artwork
- webs and lists
- Venn diagrams, flow charts, tree diagrams, and other graphic organizers
- graphs, data charts, and cause-and-effect tables
- scientific data and illustrations.

These supports provide organization and structure for writing, and they serve as foundations for students as they compose, draft, and revise. Having adequate space right next to the writing page makes using the plans easier and more effective. In addition, it makes your review of the plan and the written result much easier and faster.

### Composing, Drafting, and Revising with *My Writing*

As students compose in *My Writing*, they will write on the **bold lines**, using the revision lines marked with the “R in the star” to revise as they write, as well as make later revisions and corrections. (The first bold line at the top of each page can be used for a title or to start the first sentence, with any revisions made in the margin above.) The R in the star makes it easy for students to remember to leave a line for revisions, and many teachers see improved legibility when students skip lines and make revisions in this way. In addition, the revision lines give you space for instruction in conventions.

We encourage students not to erase, which takes more time and deprives you of valuable data about the students’ abilities and processes. Through corrections and revisions, you can assess such things as students’ growing awareness of correct spelling or their replacement of over-used words with more precise words. That’s why we teach students to put a line through words they are changing and then write the revision on the line above.

Students need opportunities to meet together, listen to each other's writing, and ask the author questions that will help the writer come to grips with his or her work. Using *My Writing*, you can teach students to have their own revision conferences, in which they ask themselves key questions and then use the revision lines and blank pages on the left to re-work parts of their drafts.

Possible revision questions include:

- What am I trying to say?
- What is my message?
- Did I say what I meant to say?
- Does it make sense?
- Will readers understand?
- Could I say it better? With fewer words? With richer description?
- How can I make my writing clearer?
- Are my facts correct?

Students can also learn to use the three key revision strategies, all of which *My Writing* accommodates. Those strategies are:

1. Adding on; elaborating
2. Deleting; eliminating the unnecessary
3. Reorganizing; restructuring the order of the writing.

The revision lines also serve as a kindness to both teachers and students. Writing instruction organized to prevent students from copying unchanged material will save time and improve attitudes toward writing. The revision lines, as well as the space on the blank pages that can be used for revision of an entire section, allow you to teach students how to revise and rework selected portions of their writing without copying the entire draft.

### **Editing, Proofreading, and Publishing with *My Writing***

As the piece nears completion, the writer needs to proofread and edit. Students must learn to craft a piece of writing that has correct grammar, spelling, and

punctuation in order to demonstrate respect for their readers and communicate effectively.

Pages 78 and 79 of *My Writing* help you teach the conventions of editing, and these pages provide students with a checklist to refer to and use when proofreading. There is space for a student to record an example from their own writing where they have correctly used an editing skill. This becomes a known or familiar reference point that helps students apply and practice what they are being taught to use.

An important part of the joy of writing comes from the response of an audience. Teachers using the writing process understand the power of publishing and helping students get their writing to an authentic audience. Students can share their books with other students by reading to each other aloud or by silently reading each other's writing. Adults, including parents, are also an important audience.

### **Using *My Writing* for Other Types of Writing**

The entire writing process is not used for every piece of writing. The process is complex and involves simultaneously controlling many skills and techniques. By allowing students to focus on one particular writing strategy at a time, you can help students gain a feeling of success and accomplishment quickly in regard to one technique. Students will then feel more comfortable applying the newly accomplished skill to writing in other areas. Across time, and skill by skill, the young writer accumulates a repertoire of writing techniques.

For these purposes, students can use the book for snippets of writing as they experiment with a "sliver" of the writing process as a craft. For example, during a craft lesson or mini-lesson on an aspect of writing such as how and why to use powerful verbs, students could write one sentence and experiment with changing verbs and their impact. Students will not be using the entire writing process at that point but can still take advantage of the revision lines and other helpful features.

### USING MY WRITING FOR ASSESSMENT

With each student's writing in one easily accessible place, *My Writing* becomes a formative assessment tool that helps you continually assess and monitor student writing in order to plan for new mini-lessons, writing conferences, modeling, and writing demonstrations. By identifying students' errors and strengths, you gain the information you need to inform your instruction.

In addition, we also use the book to look at other aspects of students' writing, and the possibilities are truly endless. You can use your state and district standards to guide your assessment as well as the rubrics most states now have for evaluating writing. A sampling of questions you might want to ask about your students' writing can include:

#### Content and Ideas

What is the student's message?

Is the message clear?

Does the student stay on topic?

Is the topic narrow?

#### Organization

Is the piece of writing easy to follow?

Does the writer use effective transitions and other supports?

#### Style/Voice

Does the writer use imaginative words and phrases?

Do the sentences vary in length and structure?

Does the writing invite expressive oral reading (which demonstrates sentence fluency)?

#### Conventions

Are words spelled correctly?

Does the writer pay attention to punctuation and grammar?

Having the writing in a single book enables you to see progress and growth across time, turning the book into an authentic assessment that shows what students are actually learning and accomplishing in the classroom. You can also see the long-term effectiveness of the writing process and consider how to improve your instruction as well as further support each student.

Students also participate in this process as they excitedly look back at their earlier writing and see the evidence of their growth and maturity.

### ENCOURAGING AUTHORSHIP AND ENJOYMENT

By creating and completing their own books, students develop a sense of authorship and ownership. In addition to serving as a resource for the writer, *My Writing* becomes a collection of the writer's stories and experiences and therefore a part of his or her history. As the school year winds down to an end, you will find writing has given your students a way of exploring their dreams, hopes, aspirations, and vivid imaginings, which they now have recorded and can share with others. What a great way to reinforce the power and pleasure of writing!

#### References

Graves, Donald. 1994. *A Fresh Look at Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

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