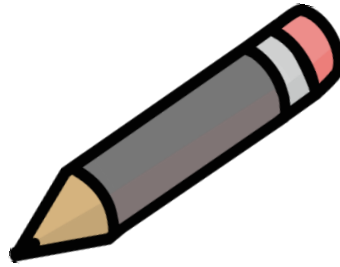


Writing

Mini-Lessons



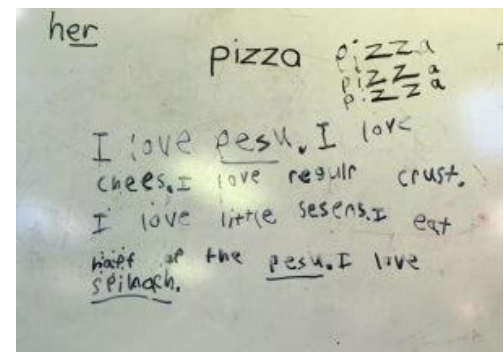
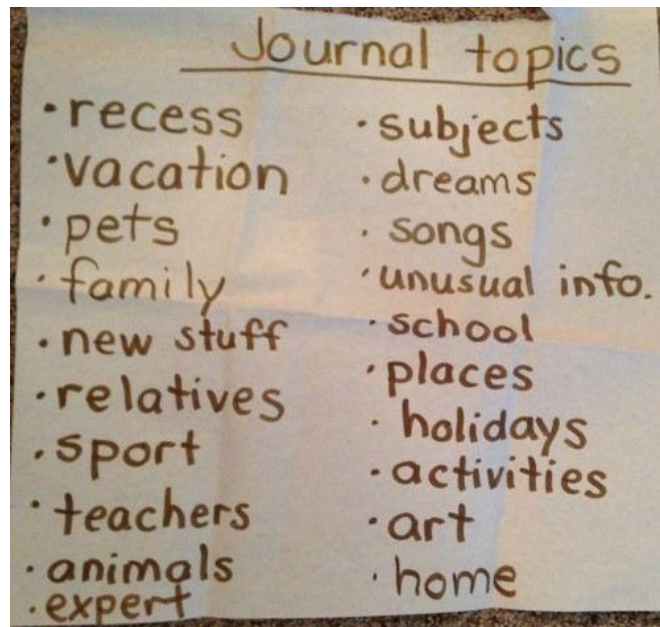
- Mini-Lessons are meant to address student needs - so your decisions shouldn't necessarily come from a sequenced list, but based on what you see the students doing (or not doing).
- They are meant to be short (hence the name mini-lesson) - maybe 10-15 minutes.
- Focus on one topic per mini-lesson. Then practice that one aspect of writing.
- Decisions on mini-lessons can be based on any writing students are doing (journal, prompts, reading responses, and other curriculum writing assignments).
- How often? I would try 1-2 mini-lessons per week. Alternate days with handwriting instruction and journal writing if you only have one block of time for writing.
- Writing mini-lessons can also be done as a part of your guided reading weekly routine. This means you can differentiate your instruction based on the group of students with whom you are working.
- Always model and use think alouds. Your writing mini-lessons will be more effective if you have already been utilizing shared writing methods. Use some of your own writing to introduce a mini-lesson.
- **Don't forget to praise when you notice a student who has implemented some of your mini-lesson strategies. Give specific info to a student directly. Specific praise (not just "Good job") will result in more consistent use of what you praised them for. Example: "I noticed you have ending punctuation on all of your sentences. Keep it up!"**

Mini-Lesson Ideas: These are not listed in any particular order because you should select ones based on what students need. However, these are in somewhat developmentally appropriate order from younger to older students.

1. Help students see the difference between letters, words, and sentences. Then your discussion about spacing within words and between words will be applied more readily. This visual is from Pinterest (www.kindergartenchaos.com).



2. Put down on paper what you want to say. Writing is just "talk" written down.
3. Compose an idea so it is a complete sentence. Encourage speaking in complete sentences. This translates writing in complete sentences. Don't allow a sentence to start with "because . . ." Then it's not really a complete sentence.
4. Draw a picture and generate a sentence about it. Teacher says, "Tell me about your picture." Teacher can then write it down for the child (or just listen to hear their sentence.)
5. Write from left to right and then return sweep to the next line.
6. If using lined notebook paper, show the correct orientation (holes, header space, etc.).
7. Give students sentence frames such as: I like . . . or I can . . . or He will . . .
8. Generate a list of possible topics with the students help. Post them for student reference. Add to it frequently. These prompts could be personalized and attached to the inside cover of their journal.
9. Use questions to expand a topic. Model a short sentence such as, "I have a pet." Allow children to ask questions to help you expand into other sentences such as: What kind of pet? What is his name? What color? How big?
10. Reread your own writing. It's easy to catch mistakes (omitted word, etc.). I suggest younger students reread it each time they are ready to add a new word. This is because they are often concentrating so hard on spelling the word they forget what should come next. Example: I am . . . I am going . . . I am going to . . . I am going to play . . . I am going to play with . . .
11. Remind students about spelling strategies and use of temporary spelling. Identify one or two misspelled words to work on. The child probably realizes they didn't spell it right. Rather than dwell on it (taking up writing time), tell them to circle or underline it and continue writing. Just pick 1 or 2. If they pick all of the words they think they misspelled . . . well you know some children's papers would be all circles. You can help the child select one of the words to work on - one that's close to correct and likely to be used frequently.



12. Give a title to the writing. This helps keep the child focused on their topic (*My Baby Brother, Grandpa's Trophy*).
13. These words need capital letters: **I**, beginning of sentence, names, special places, etc. You might need to break this up into separate mini-lessons: Do your students forget to capitalize **I** when it is by itself? Try mentioning this to students: **I** is a letter (i), but also sometimes a word (**I**). Since "**I**" is really a substitute for the speaker's name (and all names are capitalized), then **I** should be capitalized. This is not the case with **a** and **A** since neither one of these are a name.
14. Add punctuation (separate mini-lessons): ending marks, commas, quotation marks, dashes
15. Eliminate run on sentences (and . . . and . . .and). I usually told my students, "maximum of one *and* per sentence" as a rule of thumb. If you have more than one *and* consider how to break it up into two sentences.
16. Use transition words to help the writing flow more smoothly. This also helps eliminate the number of *ands*. Examples: *First, Then, Next, Secondly, However, But, While, Since, and Finally.*
17. Replace overused words: *fun, said, went, like, good, etc.* Make a chart of synonyms.
18. Vary the beginning of sentences.
19. Show effective use of questions in writing. There are appropriate times to add a question, especially if you have plans to answer it within the writing. Adding a question sparks interest and can change the tone of the writing. Example: "My family went on a special vacation last month. *Do you know where we went? We* drove to some very interesting caves in New Mexico!"
20. Start to use more descriptive language (adjectives). The student can pick out one or two nouns used in their sentence and then insert an adjective to describe it. Example: My dog played with a bone. Improved: My dog played with a toy bone.
21. Use more descriptive language to modify verbs (adverbs). The student can pick out one or two verbs used and insert more information to tell how, where, when, why. Example: My dog played with a toy bone. Improved: My dog played with a toy bone *while hiding under the kitchen table.*
22. Teach children how to share their writing verbally with others (more than one mini-lesson). Some ideas:
 - Use appropriate level voice if you are sharing with one person vs. a whole class.
 - Hold your book down so it isn't covering your mouth.
 - Emphasize words to make your "voice" come through.
 - Listeners have obligations too - eyes on reader, show an interest, be prepared to ask follow-up questions or comment.



- Don't force a student to publicly share their writing. It may be too personal to share. Perhaps they can select an earlier writing within the past month instead.

23. Address the use of verb tense while writing will give students the opportunity to *apply* this skill. Often I notice the -s or -ed on the end of the verb is missing in a child's writing. But when they read it to me I can hear them include it. So just calling students attention that their writing should match their speaking might catch some errors.

24. Learn how to proofread by starting an Editor's Checklist. Just introduce one at a time so students are checking for that ONE thing. Gradually add more to the checklist:

- Sentence is complete
- Beginning capital
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Stay on topic
- Capital letters for names and places
- Verb tense