

Writing skills: The essentials

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Writing Skills are an essential component of communicating and develop over time. It does not matter the intention of writing, it is a skill used daily, and we must prepare our students to have the adequate skills they will need to function as writers. Writing skills taught in school are focused on academic writing, which should transfer and generalize across settings. Writing skills take on different forms with a variety of levels of importance. The necessary writing skills needed include; the writing process, which is supported by, mechanics, writing for a variety of purposes, and finally, building technological skills.

The writing process is one of the most valuable sets of skills that develop over time. Developing the ability to plan, draft, revise, and edit, leading to a published product, is a big task. It must be done intentionally and often with students at all grade levels. Planning, the first step, involves brainstorming the purpose, audience, and format of their writing. Students often struggle to get started and need modeling of strategies to build knowledge on how to plan meaningfully and purposefully. Strategies for planning include setting goals, conducting research, brainstorming previous knowledge, organizing and collecting information, and reflection. The outcomes of planning can look different, including graphic organizers, charts, notes, or lists. The second step, drafting, requires students to use skills and strategies to transfer initial ideas into the beginning stages of their piece, keeping in mind, purpose, audience, and format.

The skills in drafting do not include thinking about sentence structure, spelling, or grammar. Just like the other steps, this takes several skills before mastering independently. Similar to all steps, these skills must be modeled and practiced. The third step in the writing process is revising. During the revision process, one must focus on the organization of the text to make sure it flows with clarity and consistency; they are also evaluating their original writing goals to ensure the message is coming across correctly. The skills for revision should be taught gradually as students build their knowledge. To go along with revision, and the writing process in general, the skill of reflection and feedback are essential for the writing process. Students need to ask themselves questions to reflect on their writing, as well as provide peer feedback. Feedback from peers and teachers is an essential step in the writing process to improve skills. Editing is an additional skill needed for the writing process. This happens once the writer has revised and restructured the writing piece; at this point, the writer needs to use skills for evaluating the grammar, syntax, spelling, and word choice. This process provides the skills necessary for producing organized and intentional writing.

The mechanics of writing are foundational and essential. The skills connected with the mechanics of writing include; appropriate sentence structure and fluency, including word choice, as well as including the appropriate capitalization, punctuation, and all grammar. These skills develop over time across grade levels and are taught to help students to build their foundational skills while also building their higher-order writing skills and producing final pieces.

Writing looks different depending on the purpose and audience. Writers need to consider this when they begin their writing process. To be able to write for a variety of purposes is an important skill to show their voice. Each style of writing and each audience is unique, and students need to have the skills to know which one is appropriate and how to form each one.

The growth of technology over the last two decades has increased the need to incorporate skills such as word processing, and research through the use of technology. The skill of writing using a word processor is an additional skill that needs to be taught separately and simultaneously to the writing process. Research shows that writing skills improve for students when technology is incorporated. Students need necessary typing skills and learn the skills for finding resources online that are valid to use in their writing. In addition to the basics, technology has opened up new doors to writing by adding digital media and web pages. All of these platforms require skills in writing; therefore, writing and technology go hand-in-hand.

Further Readings.

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