Top 10 Tips for Creating Successful Writers

1. **Schedule Writer’s Workshop Daily.** Scheduling Writer’s Workshop daily grants valuable, necessary time for students to practice and grow as writers.

2. **Establish and Commit to Routines.** Life is good when everyone knows what to do and when to do it. Take the time to establish foundational routines that will impact your Writer’s Workshop throughout the year. Revisit Managing Writer’s Workshop lessons as the need arises.

3. **Model, Model, Model!** Modeling gives direct instruction while scaffolding for young writers. Use these steps to model specific skills and behaviors with students (I is the teacher and you is the student) (Pearson and Gallager 1983):
   - I do, you watch
   - I do, you help
   - You do, I help
   - You do, I watch

4. **Read, Read, Read!** Reading a variety of texts through the eyes of a writer exposes students to the craft of the author and encourages students to explore new avenues of writing.

5. **Display and Celebrate!** Walking down the hallway in a school setting, you can usually get a good idea of the writing that is going on in each classroom. The more students write, the more comfortable they become, and they will want to show off their work. Celebrate student writing and recognize students as writers.

6. **Confer Weekly.** This is your opportunity to learn about each student’s writing development. Encourage, guide, and listen.

7. **Share, Share, Share!** Young children love to share everything. Sharing during Writer’s Workshop enhances their sense of importance as writers.

8. **Involve and Inform Parents.** Writing is an automatic means of connecting with parents. Wall displays of writing samples show parents how you value their child’s writing effort. Hold an Author’s Tea and invite parents so they can see first-hand the important writing of their child.

9. **Be Flexible and Reflect.** A well-planned lesson may fall flat. So, go back to the drawing board and ask yourself, “Why?” “What happened?” How can you reteach to make the right connections for students? Take time to reflect on your teaching and student learning.

10. **Set High Expectations.** Be specific with your expectations and articulate clearly what you would like the students to accomplish. Believe in your students’ abilities and challenge them to succeed. Every child can be an author.
Sentence fluency helps make writing interesting. It is a trait that allows writers to add interest to their writing. By changing the sentence length, and where words are placed next to each other in the sentence, writers are able to help guide the reader through their work. Authors with good sentence fluency know the techniques needed to construct sentences that flow and have rhythm. The lessons assist students in exploring parts of sentences, ways sentences are built, and ways to expand sentences to develop more interesting ideas. Lessons in this section include the following:

- Lesson 1: Popcorn Sentences (page 105)
- Lesson 2: A Simple Sentence (page 108)
- Lesson 3: The Compound Subject (page 111)
- Lesson 4: Types of Sentences (page 114)
- Lesson 5: The Compound Verb (page 117)
- Lesson 6: The Compound Sentence (page 120)
- Lesson 7: Rubber Band Sentences (page 123)
- Lesson 8: A Complex Sentence (page 127)

The Simon, Sentence Builder poster (page 104) can be displayed in the room to provide a visual reminder for students that sentence fluency is one of the traits of writing. You may wish to introduce this poster during the first lesson on sentence fluency. Then, refer to the poster when teaching other lessons on sentence fluency to refresh students’ memories and provide them with questions to help guide them as they create sentences.
Who am I reading them aloud?
Do my sentences flow smoothly?

Did I use different sentence beginnings?

Did I use statements and questions?

Did I use long, medium, and short sentences?

What kinds of sentences will I use?

Sentence Builder

Simon
Rubber Band Sentences

Procedures

Note: To model the lesson, have cards prepared showing the question words: who, which, when, what kind, and where. Repeat this often, as it improves sentence length, rhythm, and understanding of sentence variety. You can use a rubber band or other manipulative to represent sentence length.

Think About Writing

1. Explain that authors use varied sentence length—short and long—to add variety and energy to their writing. Too many short or too many long sentences can make writing monotonous or boring.

2. Review mentor texts, if desired, and emphasize the author’s use of various sentence lengths. For example, “In the story Bedhead by Margie Palatini, the action moves quickly and keeps you interested because of varied sentence lengths.” Read several sentences aloud and stretch a rubber band to show the varied sentence lengths.

Teach

3. Tell students, “Today I will show you one way you can build variety in your sentence lengths.”

4. Explain to students that adding words to sentences gives the reader more details and will build more interesting sentences. Today, they will add details by asking questions. Display and discuss the Rubber Band Sentences Notebook Entry (page 125).

5. Display the Question Word Cards (page 126). Write the following sentence on sticky notes, one word per sticky note, and post on a sheet of chart paper:

   The baby cried.

   Stretch a rubber band to show the sentence’s length.

Standards

- Uses a variety of sentence structures in writing
- Uses strategies to draft and revise written work

Materials

- Chart paper
- Markers
- Writer’s Notebooks
- Sticky notes
- Rubber Band Sentences Notebook Entry (page 125; rubb bandsentences.pdf)
- Rubber band
- Question Word Cards (page 126; questionwordcards.pdf)

Mentor Texts

- Bedhead by Margie Palatini
- See Mentor Text List in Appendix C for other suggestions.
Rubber Band Sentences (cont.)

6. Model how to use the *Question Word Cards* to add words and build the sentence. Write the answers to the questions on sticky notes and add the sticky notes to the original sentence:

- **When?**: this morning
  *This morning, the baby cried.*
- **What kind?**: hungry
  *This morning, the hungry baby cried.*
- **Who?**: Jamie's
  *This morning, Jamie's hungry baby cried.*
- **Where?**: in her crib
  *This morning, Jamie's hungry baby cried in her crib.*

After each question, read the new sentence as you stretch a rubber band to provide visual support of the growing sentence. You may need to add additional sticky notes to change previously capitalized words to lowercase; however, remember to keep the focus on expanding sentences.

**Apply**

8. Encourage students to use questions to construct more interesting and detailed sentences. Provide students with the *Rubber Band Sentences Notebook Entry* to add to their Writer's Notebook and the *Question Word Cards* to keep in their writing folders. Have students work on the *Your Turn* section before proceeding to their writing folders.

**Write/Conference**

9. Provide time for students to write. As they work, move around to confer with individual students or provide small-group instruction.

**Spotlight Strategy**

10. Spotlight students who use both short and long sentences in their writing. For example, “Isabella wrote a brilliant sentence that sounds smooth and rhythmic. Smart work!”

**Share**

11. Have students meet in triads to share their best sentences. Remind students to give each other compliments. Provide approximately two minutes for students to share.

**Homework**

Ask students to look in books for examples of how authors vary the lengths of their sentences. Have students copy one long and one short sentence from a book.
Rubber Band Sentences

Authors use both short and long sentences to enhance meaning and vary sentence length.

Example: The baby cried.

When?: this morning
This morning, the baby cried.

What kind?: hungry
This morning, the hungry baby cried.

Where?: in her crib
This morning, the hungry baby cried in her crib.

Who?: Jamie
This morning, Jamie’s hungry baby cried in her crib.

Your Turn:
Turn these short sentences into long sentences.

- The car honked.
- The boys ran.
- A dog barked.
- The lion roared.
Question Word Cards

Directions: Cut out the cards. Use the cards to model how to add words to build sentences. Then, have students use the cards to practice building their own sentences.

Who or which?

When?

What kind?

Where?