

# Back to School *Writing Basics:*

A great way to start off the new year is to focus on basic sentence and paragraph writing as you teach your students the procedures for writer's workshop. Depending on your grade level standards, you can use any of the attached lesson ideas from the *Night Writer's* project to build individual sentences or paragraphs with students. Using white boards for these lessons will greatly reduce the need for copies and allow you to give instant feedback.

Use your grade level writing standards list to determine which writing conventions and strategies you would like to focus on during these lessons.

For Common Core Standards, please see also our Teacher Tool, **The Complete Sentence Overview** in our new Common Core Section on our website [knoxeducation.com](http://knoxeducation.com).

Writing Strategies	Written Conventions

1 Starts with a **CAPITAL LETTER**

2 Has a **SUBJECT** and a **VERB** which expresses a **COMPLETE THOUGHT**

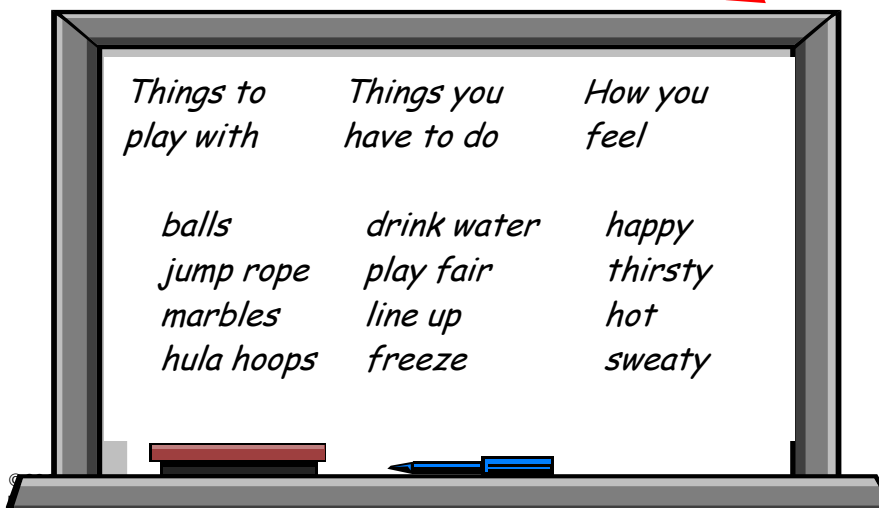
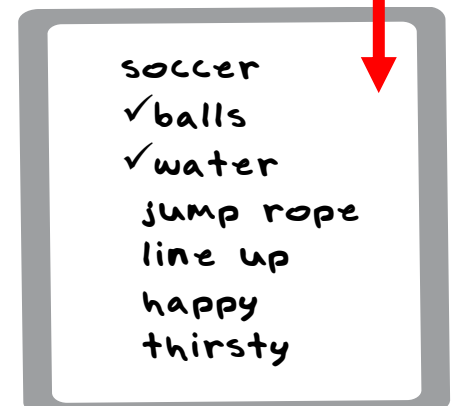


3 Always has an **END POINT**



**Follow this basic procedure with the white boards:**

1. Brainstorm a list of words for students to be able to use as they compose the sentences/paragraphs using the "no repeats" strategy. Students list as many words as possible to go with the category (for example things we do in school) on their white boards. The teacher calls on one student at a time to share their list (call on the student with the fewest words on their list first). As students listen and see you list the words on the large white board, they cross off words on their own boards that are the same. Continue calling on students until you have listed all of their ideas. If you have time, categorize the big list into sub-categories like the list below. This greatly enhances the retention of these vocabulary words into long term memory, as well as makes the list easier to use as a support to writing.

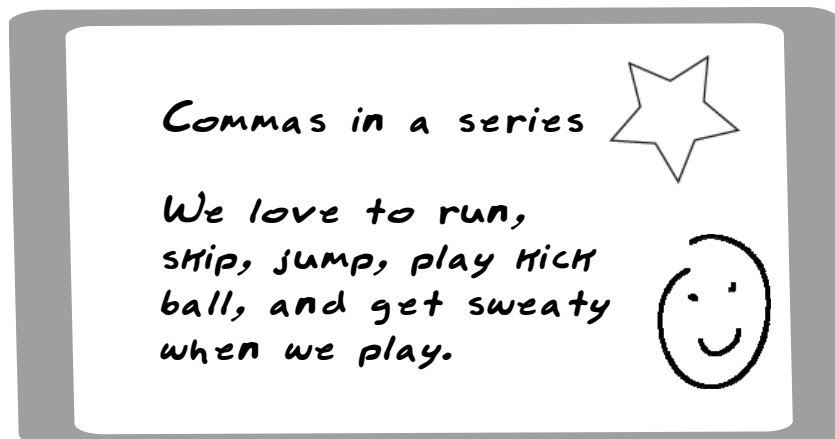


2. Model for students a sample sentence or paragraph focusing on the objective for this lesson. For example if it is a sentence with the conjunction it may be:

*Math is my favorite subject in school, but PE is more fun!*






3. Ask students to write their own sentences or paragraphs with the focus structure.
4. Have students read their work out loud from their whiteboards to their partners. Ask student volunteers to read aloud their writing to the whole class. (**Hint:** Partners can “volunteer” their neighbor’s writing.....)
5. After celebrating the content of the writing and all the good ideas, then ask students to edit their work following a simple checklist you may list on the board (for example):
  - Capitals where they go*
  - Punctuation*
  - Spelling*
  - Spacing*
  - Neat handwriting*
6. Finally have students “peer edit” each other’s sentences using the same checklist and giving feedback in the form of a happy face or whatever you choose.

Here’s a sample of students creating a sentence referring to a standard mastered...



7. At the end of a lesson students may choose to “publish” their best sentence onto the 5 star worksheet attached here. You may want to publish several class books of 5 star sentences for various sentence types you focus on. For example, “Our 5 Star Compound Sentences” or “Our 5 Star Sentences with Commas in a Series.”
8. You can follow this procedure for any of the lessons here or any others you may design as you have students warm up to the basics of writing in the first month of school.

## 5-Star Checklist - Sentences

 <b>Punctuation</b> . ? ! " ' ,	 <b>Capitals only where they go</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning of sentence</li> <li>• Names</li> <li>• Months</li> <li>• Days of the week</li> </ul>	 <b>Spelling</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All word wall words</li> <li>• Harder words spelled using the sound cards</li> </ul>	 <b>Spaces between all words</b>	 <b>Paper is Neat</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handwriting</li> <li>• No smudges</li> </ul>
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Writer Signature

Writing Partner

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Writer Signature

Writing Partner

### 5-Star Checklist: Descriptive Paragraph Writing

 <b>TOPIC SENTENCE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indent</li> <li>• Main Idea</li> </ul>	 <b>DETAILS</b> 	 <b>CLOSING SENTENCE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restate main idea, or</li> <li>• Make a connection</li> </ul>	 <b>REVISE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sense?</li> <li>• Word choice?</li> </ul>	 <b>EDIT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spelling</li> <li>• Capitals</li> <li>• Punctuation</li> </ul>
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Writer Signature

Writing Partner

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