



Informal Writing Assessment

In order to create a remedial writing program using more Right Brain Teaching Strategies for fast improvement, we need to know, informally, the level of writing skills the student has now. This is not a formal test of grammar, punctuation, etc., but rather an informal assessment of basic writing skills, such as knowing what a sentence is; using punctuation; and adding adjectives. All of these skills represent a different level of writing ability.

It is so important to get a **BASELINE** of **WRITING SKILLS** so that, as the year goes on, you will be able to monitor the progress. It may be a few months before you see much progress, but my experience is that if you make the rewards consistently enough (using our “Zany Correction Strategy” taught in the “Right Brain Paragraph and Composition Writing” DVD), you will see improvements in the first month. It’s all about Modeling, Method and Motivation. Such fun to watch this progress.



Begin the assessment by showing the student a picture that is interesting. For our purposes here, we will show the student a picture of a bird in a cage singing (represented by notes coming out of his mouth.)

Ask the student to **“write one very good sentence about what you see in the picture.”**

Following are the various sentences the student will likely give you, depending on the writing skills he has. The student examples go from “primitive” to more sophisticated.

Possible student responses:

- “brd in kaj”
- “the brd is in the caj”
- “The brd is in the cag.”
- “The berd is singing in the kage.”
- “The small bird is singing in the cage.”

Your response to anything they write is, “Thank you” (**no criticism or correction at this time!**). We now have the information need to plan our teaching steps.

Evidence of need for writing remediation:

1. Any writing reversals? (if so, ...even one...we use the Writing Eight Exercise daily)
2. Non-writer? (just their name)
3. No capital letters at beginning of sentence
4. No period at end of sentence
5. Incomplete sentences
6. No adjective added

From their written response to the picture you have presented, you will see the skills that need to be taught. We're just looking for a baseline here of their current writing functioning level. If they write any reversals at all, this is a big flag that they need to do the writing eight exercise daily. If they do not know how to write with capitals and periods, the "Zany Correction Method" in the "Right Brain Paragraph and Composition Writing" DVD will show you exactly how to give "points" for the good things they do, so they automatically will start with capitals and end with a period.

There are no "grade levels" as such, to give this writing sample. We are just looking for their writing knowledge....the basics. Then, we start our lessons at the level they are presently functioning. This is very carefully demonstrated in the "Right Brain Paragraph and Composition Writing" DVD for the three writing levels: Beginning or Non-Writer; Intermediate Writer; Advanced Writer. All the instruction is done on the white board together, using the "points" system that we show in the "Right Brain Paragraph and Composition Writing" DVD. Kids and teens love this method of writing together, and get very motivated by the "reward system" of writing improvements. After the child or teen has become good at this more Right Brain method of writing, then they are ready to go on to any other very good composition writing program. There are many good writing programs available, including Andrew Pudewa's "Excellence in Writing". We just use this method for remediation, until they are writing paragraphs and short papers easily.

Again, in the "Right Brain Paragraph and Composition Writing" DVD, you will find instructions on how to teach and remediate writing for all levels of writing.

- For a beginning or non-writer, we do the writing eight exercise, and then have them write a sentence that they have read in their Craft Student Reader, or another decodable student reader. We leave the Right Brain Phonics Cards on the table so they can sound out the decodable words they want to write, and the Right Brain Sight Word Cards that they can choose from for their sentence. For example, you would have on the table, the Phonics Cards, "c", "a", "t", "f", "s" and "m", and the Sight Word Cards "the" and "is". They would write the sentence, "the cat is fat." Later on they can write the sentence, "The fat cat sat on the mat."
- Once they are re-writing a sentence (from memory and the cards on the table) from their Reader, they are ready to write a sentence from a stimulus picture. I often used covers of a book as my "stimulus picture". I find one that is interesting (a kitten playing with yarn; a boy running, etc.) and have them write "one very good sentence". For example, they may write "the kitn is plang wih strng."

In the "Right Brain Writing Program" (that I created and used for an entire year with my students, before they went on to a more structured curriculum -based writing program) all the steps are given to teach a "Beginning or Non-Writer"; "Intermediate Writer"; or an "Advanced Writer." You will love seeing the changes in your reluctant, or "primitive", writer that will occur in just the first six weeks. They will love the new "zany correction strategy" that you will use with their writing. They get points and mini-rewards for every "GOOD" thing they have in their writing. They will begin to "beg" to write, because they love to see how many "points" they get. A bad day, turns into "fun" day.

I have many of my college students tell me that they still use the “Right Brain Webbing Method” before they write any of their papers. Since they are visual, they love “seeing” the whole paper in the “bubbles” before they write it. This is a great method to plot out all writing. I even use it before I write my articles for magazines. I hope you find this helpful for you, too.

“ I’m so excited to report that after watching me score his first sentence and helping me develop a reward chart, my son thought writing once-a-week wasn’t nearly enough and has requested to do writing first thing every day. He’s also been so much more careful with his grammar, capitalization, and punctuation and has caught his own errors as I gave him points for what he did correctly. Additionally, he asked if he could go back and make his sentences more complex to earn more points. I really can’t believe how much motivation this new method of writing has given him! Dianne made some pretty big promises in her DVD and I’m starting to believe she might just be right.” **-Angie**

“He loves the right brain writing program. Never have I seen him so happy to write something as he is now. Today he wrote a whole paragraph and you could just see the look of triumph on his face!” **-Christy**