



# Introduction to the Level 1



## “Expeditions Into Writing” Manual



Writing, as we all know, is not always a beloved activity for students. More often than not, getting students to write more than a sentence (often poorly constructed) is like pulling teeth. We are convinced, however, that the more comfortable students feel about writing, the more likely they are to write more text and write more often.

So, then, how do we get students to feel comfortable with the writing process? We do this by helping them to become skilled, and by demonstrating through many enjoyable writing experiences, that writing can be fun, fulfilling and is crucial to everyday life.

Hopefully, this *Writing Manual* will give you many, many ideas on how to approach and teach the writing process, and how to tie the activities found in this *Manual* directly into your *Zoo-phonics® Expeditions Into Reading and Spelling Manuals*.

### What is in the Level 1 “Expeditions Into Writing” Manual?

In this *Writing Manual* you will find:

- the Zoo-phonics philosophy and method of teaching for all aspects of the writing process (handwriting, spelling, sentence structure, writing for information, as well as expression).
- current research, which is being held as the standard for excellent phonics, reading, spelling, and writing instruction.
- lesson plans, games, activities, Blackline Masters, editing sheets, checklists, and student practice work sheets that present a good balance between skill development, student expression and creativity.

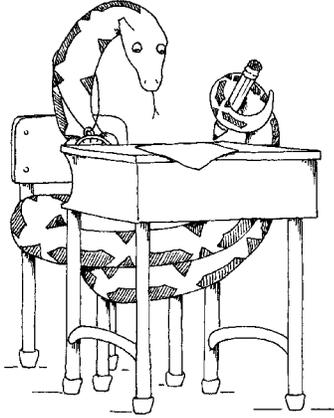
Because this book was designed primarily for first graders, it tracks the developmental abilities of first graders: building on the alphabet, processing through the phonics spectrum (CVC words, blends, digraphs, the schwa sound, long vowels, diphthongs, silent letters, and soft sounds); and establishes sentence and paragraph writing skills. These activities and worksheets, however, can be used with a student of any age who needs more hands-on and reinforcement of basic skills. For this reason, we labeled it, “Level I” as opposed to “First Grade...”

Creative and informative writing is promoted in all the Zoo-phonics materials, yet the focus is on honing writing skills emphasized in this *Writing Manual*. It is here that students will learn the structure and conventions of the writing process. Please note that all four *Manuals* (*Spelling*, *Reading*, *Writing* and *Assessment Inventory*) work hand-in-hand with each other.



## Where Do We Begin?

When you look at the writing process in its entirety, it all begins with listening and oral language. Zoo-phonics follows the natural hierarchy of learning (listening, oral language, reading and writing) and teaches these skills and concepts accordingly.



In the classroom the class talks first, analyzing, brainstorming, and practicing the concepts together as a whole group. Once the concepts are fully understood, the students write individually, and more independently.

We talk about the skills needed to spell and write, then we manipulate, walk through, act out and “live” the concept and skills (using the Signals, the Large Picture Cards, other Zoo-phonics® materials, games and activities, and other appropriate materials). We then begin to work on paper, through structured activities (Blackline Masters, worksheets, etc.). Finally, we turn the students loose to write (evidenced by the journal writing, and other writing experiences, found in this and other Zoo-phonics® Manuals).

By the time the students have some confidence and skills, they are equipped for the challenges of independent writing. The children retell, paraphrase, think, create, get their thoughts on paper, and then refine their work.

Think how daunting writing might appear to a six year old child. *The writing paper is blank.* From where do the letters and words (proper spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, etc.) come? From inside their heads! Therefore, we need to construct, instruct and correct—getting them comfortable, able, and excited to write.

Many activities and games have been especially designed to help promote the children’s ability to write creatively, informatively, seriously, touchingly, and humorously. Writing sentences, paragraphs, poetry, book reports, short stories and student books, and how to do research, are taught in this *Manual*. Capturing the students’ thoughts, feelings, and opinions on paper is encouraged throughout. Training the student to proofread, self-edit and peer edit is important. Many Blackline Masters for editing and report writing are provided for various ages and stages of writing. Because Zoo-phonics believes in student ethics and valuing, we have provided appropriate lesson plans and journal blanks to capture their thoughts and feelings on many age-appropriate issues. Students are encouraged to talk, analyze (as a group and alone), relate, feel, discover, and...write!



We acknowledge that not every issue, skill, or activity is covered in this *Manual*, (there isn’t a book large enough to contain that), but we hope that we have provided you with a clear guide—and many, many ideas for teaching the writing process.

*Zoo-phonics provides a balance of creativity and self-expression, coupled with the development of the skills necessary to be successful in the reading, spelling and writing domains.*

## The Writing Process



The skill of spelling is strongly related to writing, but writing means so much more than just spelling. Writing involves putting together these correctly written (one hopes) words in such an order that they will be understood by the reader. Writing involves syntax, semantics, capitalization and punctuation — all to help maintain order, and promote understanding. In fact, alphabetic awareness, phonics, reading, spelling and writing are all so tightly interwoven, the differences so subtle, that it is hard to say, with confidence, which skill should be taught first, or should they be taught concomitantly? Of course, listening and learning the language will come first, no matter what, because one starts

this process as a baby. But, can (should) a pre-schooler or kindergartner write before learning how to read? Yes, if s/he knows the alphabet (taught through many phonemic awareness activities), and if one doesn't worry about how s/he spells. If a child can speak, and knows his or her letters and sounds, s/he can begin to write.

In order to develop good spellers as well as strong readers, should you teach the phonemes for reading first, prior to writing, or should one teach the conventions of proper spelling as one teaches the conventions of reading? We believe they go hand-in-hand. Although Zoo-phonics believes in the hierarchy of learning as a standard (listening, speaking, reading, writing), we also teach these subjects in an integrated fashion.

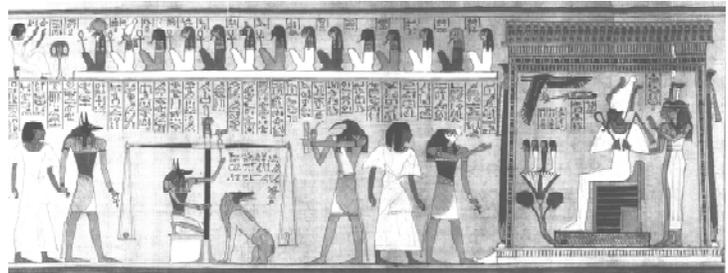
The concern of this *Manual* will be to shed light on the process of writing, and how to develop children as writers (happily, without stress).

## Language and Writing

As you begin to teach your students about phonemic and print awareness, share the following history of language development with them. Although these concepts are stated in adult words, you can paraphrase and simplify them (see simplified version on next page) so that your students, even as young as they are, may be able to understand them.

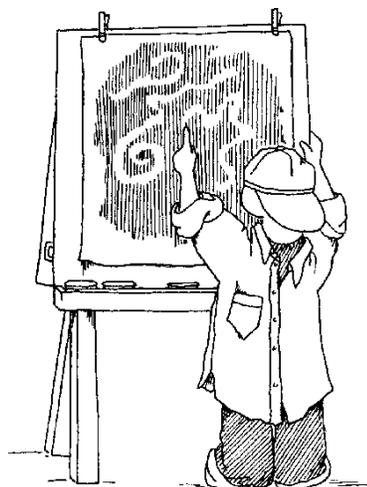
Writing has its roots in oral language. "Wherever there is human society, there is language." All members of the human species have the ability to speak (unless there is a disability). Oral language has been around a lot longer than written language. Prehistoric peoples communicated through meaningful sounds, gestures, words, and pictograms, long before someone decided to write the language on walls, tablets, clay, papyrus, *etc.* The first written language is from the Sumerians who began to write in 3,500 B. C., and the Egyptians who began to write in 3,000 B.C.

According to *The American Heritage College Dictionary* (Third Edition), the word "language" simply means any form of communication. This includes verbal and non-verbal methods from traffic lights to smoke signals, including Morse Code, American Sign Language, even Zoo-phonics® Body Signals! Obviously, to be called a language, it needs to be consistent in structure and meaning, so it can be accessed, used, and understood by the reader or user.



*Early Writing from Egypt*

Any words that we think, hear, or speak can be written on paper (or other media). As the sound/symbol connections are gradually taught, understood and mastered, the child is hopefully able to use this code in both reading, spelling and writing with more facility. Direct instruction plays a strong role here because there are sounds located in words which do not always transfer easily onto paper. Teaching the phonemes, as well as semantics and syntax as a part of your reading, spelling, and writing instruction, is imperative.



We know that writing is a gradually developed skill. From the first squiggles on paper by the toddler, to the writings of an adult, a lot of hard work has taken place to reach that level of mastery. At the toddler stage, the child writes down what s/he is thinking or wants to say, and writes it in what the child accepts as letters. S/he has seen Mom and Dad do this daily. Those squiggles are his or her personal interpretation of the writing process. As the child is continually immersed in print (remember, print is everywhere), and with the help of parents and teachers, eventually the squiggles become letters (however formed at first) that relate to speech sounds, that make words, that mean something.

As the parent, preschool or kindergarten teacher intervenes in a consistent and concrete manner and teaches the sound/letter relationships, and then letter formation, the child begins to utilize the sounds and the letters as they were intended, a code to be used in written communication.

If a child feels successful and capable, s/he is likely to spend more time on a task and complete the task with a sense of accomplishment. The ability to edit and polish the work develops as the student gains skills. As the ability to self-correct and explore grows, more advanced writing styles grow.

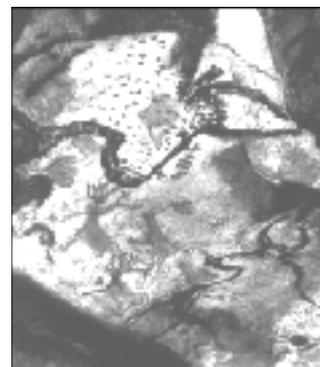
Writing is communication. How one writes can bring people together or separate them. This is a very painful and controversial statement, yet it has its roots in history. Even hundreds of years ago, one was judged on how well one wrote and spelled. Does this not happen today? What does a potential employer think when s/he looks at job applications? What goes through a teacher's mind when a note from a parent has misspelling after misspelling and grammatical errors? It is our job as educators to insure that our students leave the educational process able to communicate clearly and accurately in writing with family and friends, doctors, insurance agents, teachers, the DMV, the government, banks, lawyers, accountants and businesses.

The following is a simplified version of the above to share with your students. These discussions should take place over days, weeks and months. Refresh their memories by asking questions after you have discussed this information thoroughly and often. Bring in examples to make the discussion more real. Locate pictures of the Lascaux cave paintings, from Lascaux, France, on the internet or in a book, show hieroglyphics from Egypt, or pictures of the stone tablets from Hammurabi's Code, which came from Sumeria, for example. (On the right, Lascaux Cave Painting, Lascaux France, by Patricia Lauber, National Geographic, Washington, D.C., 1998.)

*You will find the suggested teacher's words in quotes, and the teaching suggestions or aids in parentheses.*

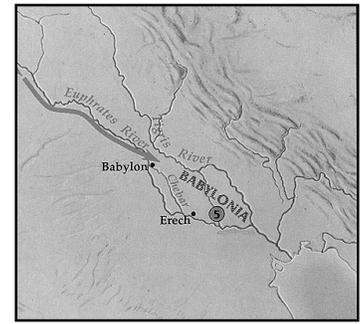
"Do you know that if you are a person, anywhere in the world, even thousands of years ago, you have **the ability to talk**. People were designed to talk. Dogs can bark, cats can meow, but people talk. They use words to tell about ideas, give directions, solve problems, create and share feelings."

"People talked long before they ever wrote down what they were talking about. There were thousands and thousands of years when no one ever wrote books, or letters or made road signs. They drew pictures inside of caves, on the sides of buildings, and on pottery, but this was artistic more than it was writing." "Later, some people called the Sumerians began to write pictures on stone tablets that represented words. The Egyptians later wrote on clay tablets, and on a special paper called papyrus. They recorded history, events, marriages, births, deaths; they told about politics and the governing royalty; business was recorded on clay tablets — how many bushels of wheat were traded, *etc.*" (On a map or globe, show the students where Egypt is, and where Babylonia was.)

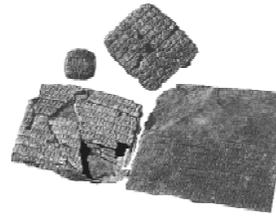


*Lascaux Cave Painting  
Lascaux, France*

“About 3,500 years ago, someone (a writer, called a scribe) realized that one could write down the spoken language without so many pictures. This person or group of people began to write one sign for every consonant. You know how we say, Bubba Bear says, “b” and show the bear’s picture in the shape of the letter? They did the same thing. For instance, the sign for “d” looked like a door. That would be the letter’s shape.” (See maps and tablets on this page.)



Map of Babylonia.



Writing on Clay Tablets

“At that time, they didn’t have any vowels (a, e, i, o u). About 500 years later, this alphabet was being used by many people from different countries. Each country would take the alphabet and change it a little to make it match their language. The Hebrews and Phoenicians used it also, and made it close to what we use today. The Hebrews needed vowels, so they were added around this time. (Show your students on a map where Israel is and where Phoenicia used to be.)

“In those days, very few people could read. Having pictures for words helped, but not all things can be drawn with a picture. Having an alphabet made reading and writing accessible to anyone who could learn the alphabet.<sup>1</sup> Just like today!”

“Can anyone tell me what the word ‘language’ means?” (Allow time for children to discuss the possibilities.)

“The word ‘language’ means any form of communication, from traffic lights to smoke signals,” including, Morse Code, American Sign Language for those who do not hear, even to *Zoo-phonics® Body Signals!*” (Explain each.) “But to be called a language, you have to have signs or words that mean the same thing every day. Each word needs to have a sign(s) or a symbol(s) that represents it, and people need to be able to read it, or else it doesn’t communicate with anyone. Most countries use an alphabet. Some countries use characters that represent letters or words. Some countries like Japan use the same alphabet we do to spell out Japanese words, and also use pictures or characters.”

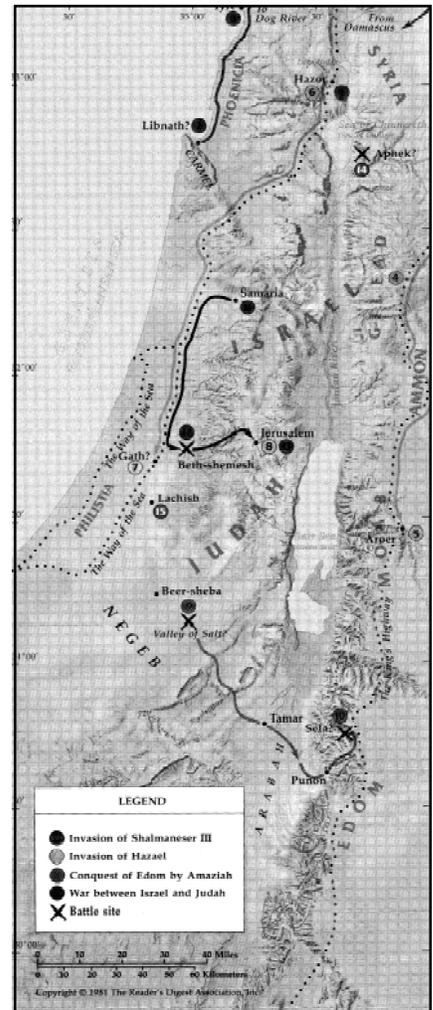


Man Big Heaven

(Show pictures of a stop sign, the McDonald’s Golden Arches®, the big K for K-Mart, the icons for male and female restrooms. Do they recognize them? Show them the icons on the computer. Point to each and discuss that they each represent something. The check mark (✓) means “spell-checker”; the little printer (☐) means “print.”)



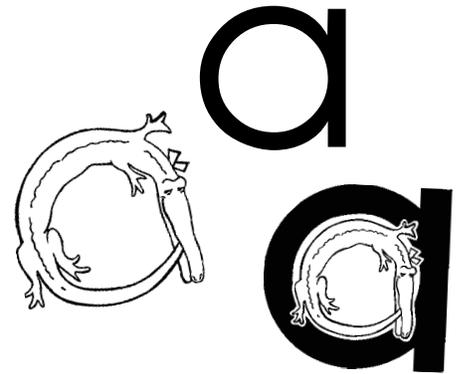
“Sometimes a symbol or even a hand gesture is used in place of words — perhaps when there isn’t room for words (computer icons), or there isn’t time for words (a police officer directing traffic), or maybe you don’t know the language, so a picture will help you (restroom signs). Reading and spelling is really the same thing. You look at a sign (A a) (kind of like a picture) which is a symbol that stands for a sound.”



Map of Phoenicia.

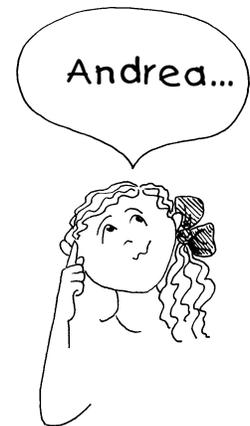
<sup>1</sup> The Encyclopedia of the Bible, edited by Pat Alexander (A Lion Book, published by Reader’s Digest, 1978).

Say the sound “a” and show them the symbol for this letter. Look at the sign that we see very often. Now show them letters. Tell them “These are like signs too. They are called symbols because they stand for something—a sound. Let’s look at the whole alphabet.” (Just look, and allow them to comment if they wish. Tell them that everyone needs to learn these letters if they are going to read and write. Now, tell them you have a very quick and easy way that is fun to help them remember all these symbols. You are going to use Animals in the shapes of the letters, and for every animal, you will do a “body-wiggle” that will help them remember the sound of the letter. This can be your introduction to the Zoo-phonics Animal Alphabet.)



“What if I said, Vergot du ogquot to you? Would you know what it meant?” (Student response.) “But what if I told you that the words mean, have a cookie. Every time I said that word, you would know you could have a cookie. That would become a part of your language.” (Try this for a day. Have lots of animal crackers in a container. Every time you see a student really working hard or being kind or helpful, say these new words. See what the response is. Have them remember it, too, so they can tell others to “have a cookie.”

“Any words that we think, hear, or speak can be written on paper. Tell me all the places where you see writing.” (Give time for students to list.)



“As the year goes by, I am going to teach you about letters that work together that represent sounds, which you will read in books and write down on paper every day for the rest of your lives! Did you know that you have been hearing and saying every one of these sounds since you were a baby? Well, now you are going to read with them and write them, but we have to learn them first. Some you already know. Let’s take a look at your names. Who can write his or her name on the chalkboard for us?” (Give students time to take turns to write their names on the chalkboard. As they do, show them how the letters represent sounds. Explore this lightly, quickly, without a lot of intellectual explanation.)



Lindsay, age 1-1/2

“You don’t learn reading or writing all at one time. You didn’t learn all the words that you use to talk with, all at one time. You started as a baby and learned new words every day. Did you know that? How do you think you learned how to talk?” (Give students time to discuss this. Guide them, adding to their conversation.)

“Do you remember the first time you ever wrote anything on paper? Do you remember what it looked like?” (Allow discussion.) “Here’s a homework assignment for tonight. Ask your parents if they kept some of the first pictures you ever drew or the first writing you ever did. See if you can bring it in to share with us.”

“You are going to see that every day and every week you will be learning how to read and spell new words. It is going to be so exciting to see each of you learn!”

**Homework Assignment:**  
Send home a note asking parents to send in any “first writings” their children have done. Ask them to put the child’s name on the back, so it can be returned safely. You can also suggest they send in a copy, rather than the original.

“As you learn more and more, you will be learning also how to check yourself to make sure you haven’t made any mistakes. Who knows what a mistake is? (Give time for answers.) It is kind of like when you were learning how to walk and you fell, and then you got right back up again. Then you fell again. But soon, you walked more than you fell, and look at you now, you hardly ever fall down when you walk! Do you think it is a mistake when you fell down when you were learning how to walk? Well, it really isn’t a mistake when you read or spell a word incorrectly when you are just learning. I will be there to help you when you read and write, because you will be making lots of reading and spelling mistakes — but it is okay, because you are all brand new readers and writers. I have an idea! Let’s say ‘whoops!’ when you make a mistake. The word, ‘whoops’ is sometimes what people say when they spill or drop something. I will say, ‘Whoops, Signal that out!’ if you make a reading or spelling mistake. You will know it is okay to make that mistake because, in time, you will learn how to read and spell the words correctly.”

“Do you know that writing is communication? Who knows what the word, ‘communication’ means?” (Allow for discussion. Supply answer, or broaden students’ answers.)

“Do you know that people can tell how much you learned in school just by looking at how you write? That might seem sad or unfair but it is true. Many high school students want a job after school or during the summer. They go to a store or a restaurant to fill out an application (explain that an application tells all about the person). If the high school student makes a lot of spelling mistakes on the application, the boss will read it and may not give the job to the student because of the spelling mistakes. It is the job of teachers and parents to make sure you learn how to spell and read really well, so you can finish high school, perhaps go on to college, get a good education, and hopefully, find an interesting job. If you are going to raise a family, you must learn how to read and write!” (Allow time for discussion.)



**Note:** *Have an application available to show the students (use the Blackline Master that follows on page 8). You can even make a transparency of it and read the information together. See how much your students can fill out themselves. Ask a local store or restaurant manager to make you a copy of some of the applications that have errors. Ask that s/he black out the personal information and show those to the students. Discuss. This is a concrete, real life reason for children to learn to read and write. In the Zoo-phonics® Assessment Inventory, there is a personal information sheet that the students can fill out, also.*

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT (PART EMPLOYMENT QUESTIONNAIRE) (AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER)			
<b>PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>			
NAME: <u>J. D.</u>	DATE: <u>11/17/92</u>	SEX: <u>M</u>	HAIR: <u>BROWN</u>
ADDRESS: <u>123 Maple Ave. #101</u>	CITY: <u>Florida</u>	STATE: <u>FL</u>	ZIP: <u>32164</u>
PHONE NO.: <u>555-5555</u>	AGE: <u>18</u> YEARS OR OLDER: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	W/M: <input type="checkbox"/>	W/F: <input type="checkbox"/>
APPLICANT'S STATUS: <input type="checkbox"/> SINGLE <input type="checkbox"/> MARRIED <input type="checkbox"/> DIVORCED <input type="checkbox"/> SEPARATED			
<b>EMPLOYMENT DESIRED</b>			
POSITION: <u>Cashier/ Clerk</u>	DATE YOU CAN START: <u>today</u>	SALARY: <u>5.00</u>	PROBATION: <u>NO</u>
ARE YOU EMPLOYED NOW? <u>NO</u>	IF YES, BY WHOM? <u>NO</u>	IF YES, POSITION: <u>NO</u>	IF YES, EMPLOYER: <u>NO</u>
WHY ARE YOU LEAVING YOUR PRESENT EMPLOYMENT? <u>don't know</u>	WHY DO YOU WANT THIS POSITION? <u>yes</u>	WHY? <u>don't know</u>	
REFERRED BY: <u>AM</u>			
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
NAME AND LOCATION OF SCHOOL: <u>The 3 trees school</u>	AGE WHEN ATTENDED: <u>8</u>	GRADE COMPLETED: <u>YES</u>	REASON FOR LEAVING: <u>NO</u>
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL: <u>MINOR</u>	AGE WHEN ATTENDED: <u>6</u>	GRADE COMPLETED: <u>NO</u>	REASON FOR LEAVING: <u>NO</u>
<b>GENERAL</b>			
REASON FOR LEAVING PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT: <u>auto shop</u>			
REASON FOR LEAVING PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT: <u>cooking</u>			
REASON FOR LEAVING PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT: <u>baseball</u>			
REASON FOR LEAVING PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT: <u>baseball</u>			

# Application for Employment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Message Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security: \_\_\_\_\_

Position you are applying for: \_\_\_\_\_

When you are available to start: \_\_\_\_\_

Days and hours you are available: \_\_\_\_\_

References: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## The Hierarchy of Learning – How Does It Fit Into the Curriculum?

There is a natural hierarchy of learning that is at the basis of all knowledge and understanding.

1. **You first listen.** This “hearing/listening” activity (for want of a better word) begins in the womb, with the first gasps of air at birth, during the first hours of life. By the time the child is one year old, s/he has heard every sound in his or her native tongue that there is to hear, and is now hard-wired. Through this, the child will learn how to speak, read, spell and write. According to Dr. Patricia Kuhl, of the University of Washington, this is the child’s “perceptual map” and is completed by the time the child is one year old!<sup>1</sup>
2. **Then you learn to speak.** From birth on, the child hears these speech sounds repeated, over and over, from the parents, siblings, other relatives, and friends. “In the first month of life, children begin small throaty sounds that turn into cooing by the end of the first month.”<sup>2</sup>



By the second month of life, the child begins to form sounds that sound like vowels. By the third and fourth months, the child begins to imitate sounds, through listening to others as they talk. By five months old, the child is beginning to watch people’s mouths, and then imitates inflections. S/he is beginning to form consonants. By six months, the baby intuitively, then experientially, realizes that if you change the shape of your mouth, other sounds form. By the seventh month, the baby adds inflections and tones. By nine months, the child actually begins to respond to words such as “no!” S/he begins to form words such as “mama” and “dada.” By ten months, the child realizes that gestures relate to words such as waving “bye-bye.” By thirteen months, the child realizes that objects relate to words (ball = “ba”). By eighteen months old, language “explodes.” Children learn as many as twelve new words a day. Each day, each week, each month, the child plays with the subtleties of speech patterns, mastering them. In the second year of life, the child is developing syntax skills, putting sounds and words in the proper order, so s/he will be understood. The child learns early to ask questions. All these newly discovered language abilities will be turned into reading and spelling skills in three to five years, depending on the child’s developmental readiness.<sup>3</sup>



3. **You learn to read.** Children are surrounded by print. It is everywhere – in their own environment (books, videos, TV, games, cereal boxes, etc.); in their parents’ environment (freeway signs, insurance papers, tax forms, recipes, medical instructions, etc.). The child observes and listens to the parents as they read. *Subconsciously, children form theories and ideas of what reading is:*

- You have to look at something in order to read.
- There must be something called “letters” and “words” on paper (or somewhere) in order to read.
- Letters and words must have meaning. They tell you something, or inform in some way.
- Reading is important. People do a lot of it daily.

If the child has been read to, and books are available from the early toddler stage, the child begins to enjoy books and has a concept of “book.” By twenty-two months, the child may even know if a book is turned upside down.

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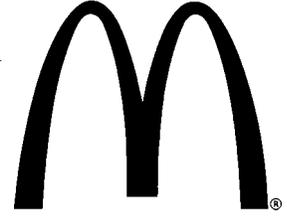
1 Newsweek, Special Edition, - *Your Child* (1997). Article, “How To Build A Baby’s Brain” by Sharon Begley, page 30.

2 Ibid, *Cultivating the Mind*, by Jennifer Lach, pages 38 – 39.

3 Ibid.

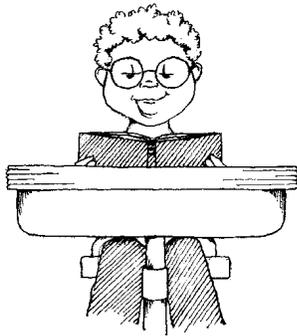
Because letters symbolize sounds, they are abstract. Toddlers have an awareness of letter use, but usually do not know the sounds that letters make. There are always very young children who can tell you what sound a letter makes or can recognize a letter name, but this is rare. (Note: children at this early age can and do learn to recognize letters and state their sounds, because of the concrete nature of Zoo-phonics.)

Parents usually teach the letter names and capital letters to their toddlers, but children often don't know what to do with them. They more often recognize whole words because of an association with a musical jingle, experience or sign, such as the Golden Arches® of McDonald's. (One can have food, toys and perhaps a trip to the playland at McDonald's.)



At around four or five, children begin to understand the alphabet more consciously and can usually recite the "ABC Song," point out letters in their own names, and write a few favorite letters, because parents teach them this, usually in capital letter form.

In kindergarten, the concepts of letters, words, sentences, and "books" are taught (front to back; top to bottom, left to right, etc.). The shapes, sounds and names of the letters of the alphabet should be taught as the foundation of the reading and writing process. Children then learn to identify the beginning sounds of words, the ending sounds, then the middle. Letters are then strung together to form words. As they become confident and able, children are then taught that various letter combinations (phonemes) make various sounds ("bl," "ch," "ai," etc.). Remember, every one of these sounds has been heard, and mastered, by the time the child is one. The task of the parent and teacher is to match these sounds to letters, and combinations of letters, so the child, in time, can address sound as soon as s/he sees a letter or phoneme, and can then write it.

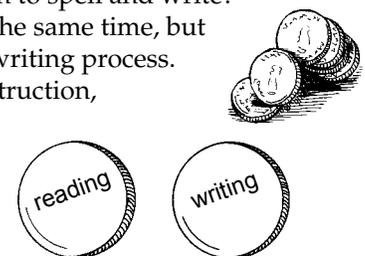


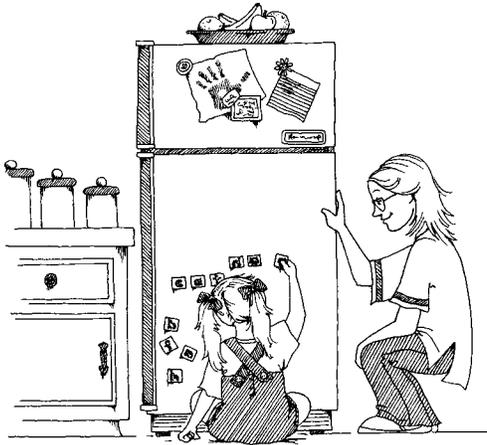
As children read, they must remember the meaning of each word, in order to catch the meaning of the whole text. This is comprehension. As children read daily, for instruction as well as pleasure, and are directly taught other sounds ("ough" has six different sounds, "ai" has five different sounds – you need to learn them all), their reading ability becomes more refined. They see that these letter combinations are used over and over again, in different words. Children learn early to make the reading – spelling – writing connection, but seldom without direct instruction.

4. **You learn to spell and write.** As was already stated earlier, there is a difference between spelling and writing. They are so integrated, that they appear to be the same or similar, but are different in definition. Spelling is a vital part of writing, but it is not all there is to writing.

Concepts of print are first learned at the oral/auditory language level. Because writing involves fine motor control which some four, five and six year old children have not quite developed as yet, children usually learn to read prior to learning how to write. The very nature of writing is more difficult. Writing involves a blank piece of paper, on which children have to compose text. Reading has all the cues right in front of the children's eyes. All they have to do is break the code. There is, however, a lot of common ground. They both involve the same phonemes or speech patterns, at which the students are already expert. If they can talk, and know the sounds of the alphabet, they can get letters and words on paper. (Perfection comes with instruction, practice, experience and time.)

We liken reading and spelling to a coin: it's the same coin, but reading and spelling are on opposite sides. They share characteristics, but have different functions. When does a child learn to spell and write? You can liken this to the birth of twins. It appears that the children are born at the same time, but one has to come first. You do not have to master reading before beginning the writing process. Phonemic awareness, or the preliminary steps prior to phonics and reading instruction, should be taught before asking the child to pick up the pencil and spell (however inaccurately). It would be a case of the proverbial "cart before the horse" to ask children to write letters or words, if they were not taught the alphabet prior to this moment.

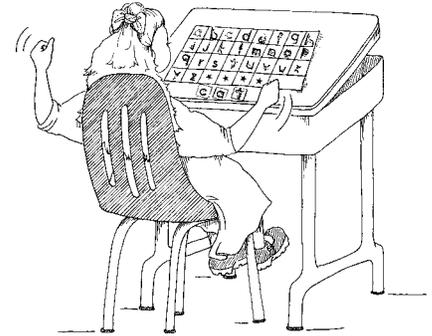




Once the concept of print *is* established, however, and the alphabet *is* taught, children can begin to pick up a pencil (chalk, crayon, felt pen, *etc.*), form the letters of the alphabet, and even spell some words. Inaccurate formation and spelling are forgiven at this time, as the child is just learning. As the children learn to orally string letters together to form words, they can also do this on paper.

Zoo-phonics recommends that the alphabet be **manipulated** first. (The *Large Picture Cards*, *Alphabet Grids* and *Alphabet Magnets* were created for this purpose.) This allows the children to “play” with the letters, moving them around, perhaps making errors and correcting them, before the child is expected to write, use lines, erase, and fatigue tiny hand muscles. As the child gains confidence in word formation, s/he can then begin to get letters and words on paper. We are convinced that playful manipulation of the letters encourages the children’s future writing, because children learn that making words is fun, and the “it’s too hard” or “it’s too boring” stigma is stopped before it starts, because the child has “know-how.”

Research states that rather than wait until certain cognitive abilities develop in children, “...it would be both wiser and more efficient to provide *all* beginning readers with a variety of language games and activities designed to develop their linguistic awareness directly.”<sup>1</sup>




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<sup>1</sup> Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print, by Marilyn Jager Adams (Center for the Study of Reading, University of Illinois, 1990)

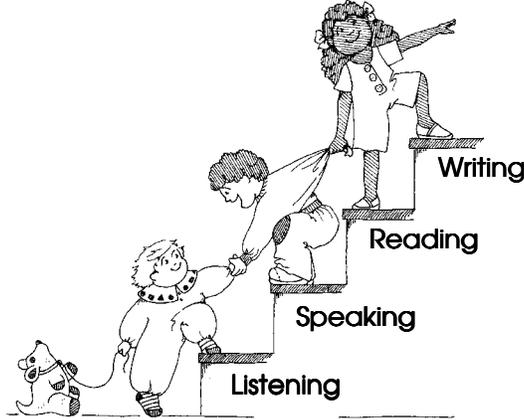


# The Hierarchy of Learning



## Listening • Speaking • Reading • Writing

(Teachers, use this blank to develop each area of your curriculum, thus integrating it. Keep a master copy.)



Name of Vehicle (book, story, song, poem, etc.):

1. Listening Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Speaking Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Reading Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Writing Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Extended Activity: (movement, art, cooking, math, science, geography activity): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

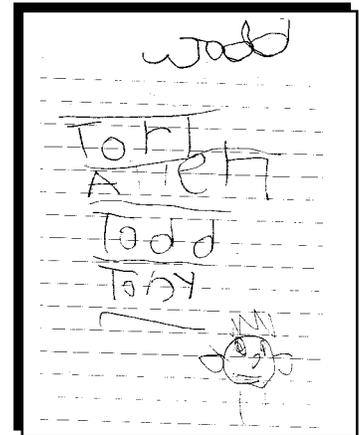
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## How Does Zoo-phonics Teach Printing and Handwriting?

You cannot talk about either spelling or writing without discussing handwriting. Handwriting is the vehicle that allows print to appear on paper. Handwriting is important to us because letter formation is a part of the foundation for reading and writing. When children write, their thoughts and feelings are so important that they need to be understood. This is why we work on letter formation as an integral part of the reading and writing process. It isn't good enough just to be creative. The creativity needs to be read. If the work is illegible, the student's work will not be fully understood nor appreciated. We are not a handwriting program, per se. But since excellent spelling and writing are our goals, good handwriting is important as the vehicle.

At young ages (and stages), all approximations for letter formation are acceptable. When the students first enter kindergarten, the foundation of the shapes and sounds (through the Animal Letters and Signals) must be firmly established before introducing printing practice. Remember, letter formation awareness is already taking place just by looking at the *Large Picture Cards*! They can visualize the shape of the letter by picturing the shape of the Animal. Then, as the Animal is placed on top of the Letter, the students' ability to remember the shape is enhanced. Transfer of this information onto paper becomes a much easier task.



Todd, Kindergartner

In the Zoo-phonics® Program, we introduce print in the Avant Garde Font, or primary print. We believe that the more simple the letter presentation, the better for our emergent readers and writers. This is comprised primarily of simple straight and curved lines and circles. *Look at the difference between these two fonts:*

All children can be good readers and spellers!

All children can be good readers and spellers!

You can see that it is easier for children to form the primary print letters (top) than the Times font (bottom), in which most books are written. There are fewer details and curves on the straight letters ("l's," "t's," etc., and the curved letters are more simple than "a" and "g," for instance).



Whereas we are firm believers in printing practice, overwhelming children with writing the letters over and over may kill the joy of writing. Instead, ask them to write several letters one or two times each, or give them special words that contain specific letters. Have them write their names. The next day, add a few more letters or words. Most importantly, always make the connections between the sounds of the letters and the letters themselves through the Body Signals. This is accomplished through using the *Large Picture Cards*, and playfully participating in the myriad of activities suggested in this Program. (See the *Zoo-phonics® Kindergarten Manual*, the *Zoo-phonics® Handwriting Packet*, and the *Zoo-phonics® Language Arts Manual - Reaching All Students*, "Teaching the Pre-school and Kindergarten Child" page 7, for ideas on how to teach handwriting easily, protecting young muscles.)

## But What About D'Nealian?

Many schools use the D'Nealian Handwriting Program®, so teachers are concerned that the Zoo-phonics print and the D'Nealian style of writing will confuse students. Our answer is that books are not written in D'Nealian, so students are going to have to recognize different types of print styles. D'Nealian handwriting is a specific style of printing and cursive to aid students in easy and neat letter formation. Our belief is that children are flexible and can see the similarities in primary print and D'Nealian print.

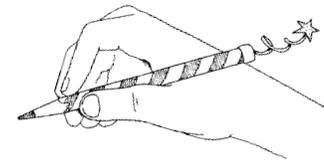


We suggest that you immediately make the connections between primary print used in Zoo-phonics and the D'Nealian style. You can do this by making a simple matching activity. Photocopy and reduce the Zoo-phonics® *Merged Animal/Letter Patterns* or *Merged Animal Letter Alphabet Grids* and the D'Nealian alphabet. Cut out the individual letters, glue each one to a 3" x 5" index card, and then laminate the cards. Students will then match each Zoo-phonics® *Animal/Letter* to its D'Nealian counterpart. Use this as a centers activity, or make a set for each child to match in class or at home. Remind your students to Signal with every match. You might as well reinforce Sound and Signal skills at the same time. Your students can practice their handwriting skills with any program that your school has chosen.



## A Few Words About Handwriting "Attitude"

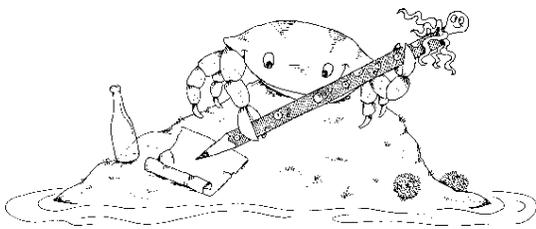
It is acceptable for pre-schoolers and kindergartners to write their letters with less than perfect formation. But, as the students progress in kindergarten and the primary grades, more will be expected. It is important that students write as carefully as they can. We, as educators, should expect any work that students produce to be neat. To expect less, is to accept mediocrity. We encourage teachers to work directly on handwriting skills, but also to help the children see that pride in one's work includes neat printing or cursive. Somebody is going to read the work. Shouldn't the work, then, be as presentable as possible?



*A proper pencil grip*

If it is a matter of motoric difficulty or disability, we can work on that directly. Too often, however, it is a matter of student and teacher standards. Send the student back to redo work that is below standard. It won't take too many redos to correct this problem.

## A Few Words About Pencil Grip



If the hand is fatigued, the hand won't write well. When it becomes tired and cranky, so does the student. Often a child holds his or her pencil incorrectly or too tightly, causing the hand to fatigue prematurely. Try this solution: Tell your students to pinch the pencil gently with the thumb and index finger, about 3/4" away from the graphite tip. The pencil then rests on the end of the middle finger. (See illustration above.)

Tell your students this, "The pincher crab sits on the rock."

Have them repeat this after you. The rock, of course, is the middle finger. Say this many times, and have them practice "pinching the pencil," and then resting the pencil on "the rock."

Purchase rubber grips for each one of your first grade students that fit on the ends of the pencils. (Make sure they fit primary pencils.) They cost about thirty cents apiece and are worth the price. This will help your students grip the pencil properly, because it automatically helps the students place their fingers correctly.

## Handwriting Activities for the Brand New Writer



1. **Grids or Magnet Writing.** Have your students use the *Alphabet Animal/Letter Grid Sets* or the *Alphabet Magnets* to manipulate print before they begin to master it with a paper and pencil. Call out the Animal's Name and Sound. Have the students hold up the Animal/Letter, Signal and Sound, and then write the letter on paper (lined or unlined). It may be easier for new writers to use unlined paper. This way, they do not have to concentrate on lines, but can concentrate on letter formation.

At first, accept all approximations. As the days go by, require the students to put the letters on the bottom line, or extend the tall letters to the top line, work on those circles that meet the middle line, *etc.* Collect samples of each student's papers and place them in his or her writing portfolio. Make sure they are dated. It will be exciting for both you and your students to see the progress each one makes over the year!

### Variation:

After they manipulate the letters with the *Alphabet Animal/Letter Grid Sets* or the *Alphabet Magnets*, have them write the letter in salt or pudding. *Here's how:* For each child, fill a cookie sheet (or place on wax paper) with either pudding or salt. The children can write the letter, then erase and correct, or write another letter! What fun, especially if they can lick their pudding fingers afterwards. The students write their letters, the teacher or aide checks the work, and then they erase and write another letter. Those students who are ready can spell simple CVC words!



2. **"Sandy" Merged Animal/Letters.** Enlarge the *Zoo-phonics® Merged Animal/Letter Patterns*. Glue each Animal/Letter onto tag board. Spread glue on the black part of the letters only (not on the Animal), and then sprinkle fine sand on it. Shake off the excess and let dry. Now children can take their index fingers and trace over the sand in the letter shape. These sandpaper letters allow for an extra tactile experience as the child's finger moves in the shape of the letter. Don't forget to have the students Signal and Sound. Constant reinforcement is essential.



3. **Gross Motor Letter Shapes.** Once the Shapes, Sounds and Signals have been mastered, printing can follow. It doesn't have to be accomplished on paper immediately. Gross motor skills have to be developed before fine motor skills. Have your young students make large curved and circular movements (a, c, e, o), lines and circles (b, d, g, h, m, n, p, q, s, u), and vertical lines (i, j, l) on the chalkboard or large pieces of butcher paper using chalk, crayon, or thick felt pens.

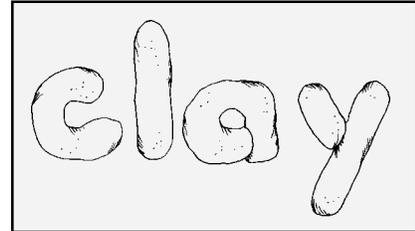
Next, work on all the letters that have perpendicular lines (f, r, t). In time, have them try diagonal lines (k, v, w, x, y, z). You may want to draw the diagonal lines lightly on paper for the students to trace. Diagonal lines, especially those that meet or intersect, can be very challenging for young children.

If you have children who are not ready for paper/pencil activities, bead stringing, screwing nuts and bolts together, clay work and finger-painting, *etc.*, are all wonderful exercises to develop hand and finger muscles and dexterity. Let them draw big circles and lines on the chalkboard or butcher paper to encourage large muscle memory. Move to writing small letters only when they are ready.

- Air Letters.** Say, "Let's draw Allie Alligator's letter shape in the air with your fingers." Demonstrate and expect everyone to respond. Make sure you have your back turned to the students as you draw in the air; otherwise, the letters are backwards for the students. Draw the shape in the air several times as you are saying the sound. Put on some wonderful classical music as you do this. Move to the rhythm of the music.

Make sure that you always show the Animal/Letter and give the Signal and Sound before tracing the letter. Because letters are abstract, wait until the students know the Shapes, Sounds and Signals with mastery before beginning abstract letter formation. Remember, always add the Signal and Sound prior to and after drawing the letters in the air.

- Clay Letters.** Shaping the letters in clay offers a large motor activity and a respite from paper and pencil. Give each child a large lump of clay or play dough. (See play dough recipe in the Home Connection found in the "Reaching All Students" section of the *Zoo-phonics® Language Arts Manual*.) Demonstrate how to make snakes. From these snakes they can make their lines and circles. Once they make one letter, have them raise their hands so you can check it, and then they are to make the next letter. Put "Come Meet Us At the Zoo" on the tape recorder, or play any kind of music. Beethoven is wonderful for clay letter making, especially his "Final Movement," from Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, OP:124, "Choral."

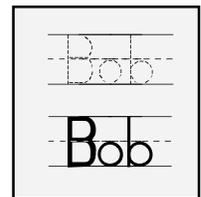


Rainbow Writing

- Rainbow Writing.** On pieces of white construction paper, write either the students' names, a special word (love, friends, joy, etc.), or a word from a CVC word list. The student is to take many color crayons and trace over and over the letters (but NOT on top of each other), giving a rainbow effect. This will give the students experience with letter writing with large movements, and will create a pretty picture at the same time. (See pages 49-52 of the *Zoo-phonics® Activity Level A1 Worksheets*.)

- Large Picture Card "Writing."** Using the black and white Animal/Letters on the back side of the *Large Picture Cards*, choose one Animal/Letter and ask a student to come up to the chalkboard and write the letter. Use a three-prong chalk holder to draw lines, if you have one. S/he must then turn and lead the class in Signal and Sound. Continue to choose another *Card*, and another student to write the letter, and so on. Have the children use colored chalk when writing their letters.

- Zoo-phonics® Handwriting Products.** The *Zoo-phonics® Activity Level A2 Worksheets* has many pre-writing and writing activities to help the children develop printing skills. The various sets of *Zoo-phonics® Handwriting Worksheets* can be duplicated for practice in class and at home. This gives students practice dealing with the bottom, middle and top lines. We have several products that help students with handwriting practice. Use the *Zoo-phonics® Computer Font* to make teacher-designed handwriting practice worksheets. The students can trace over the Animal/Letters (keeping handwriting concrete), and then the "Teacher Model" and "Kid Trace" can be used for students to actually practice letter formation.



Practice printing with student names. Ask the students to set a goal for themselves to print their names as neatly as they can every time they write them.

- a. Make "Teacher Model" or "Kid Trace" activities, using the *Zoo-phonics® Computer Font*, for each child's name. Glue them onto tagboard, and then laminate them.
- b. The students can take crayons or dry felt markers to trace and write their names over and over. When they have achieved their goals, have them write on the name tags in permanent marker. Try just the first name, then the last name, and then both names. Send them home.

9. **The Great Handwriting Bulletin Board.** Have a bulletin board set aside especially for great handwriting papers. There is nothing like success to promote more success. Make sure that you explain to the students that they are not competing against other students, only improving their own work. This way, if a student who is struggling because of a motor or visual deficit gets his or her paper up on the board, it is because that student has improved. And that is something for the entire class to applaud.

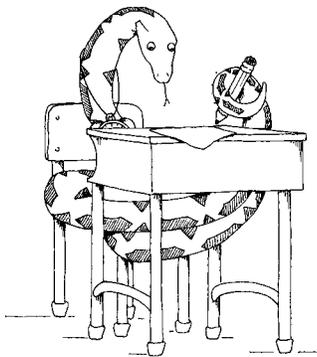


10. **Homework Activities.** Send a brief handwriting worksheet home with your students each night. Don't overwhelm them. Just give them a little homework each night to reinforce letter formation. You can make the Blackline Master easily yourself, using primary lined paper. You can also use the *Zoo-phonics® Computer Font* to generate handwriting activities, or use whichever program your school has chosen. Explain to the parents that good handwriting is a goal you and your students have set.

*Letter Practice Worksheet Suggestions:*

- a. Make Blackline Masters with one letter and have the students write it three to five times, or
- b. Make Blackline Masters with three to five letters. Ask them to write each letter one to three times, or
- c. Make Blackline Masters with letters that contain all the vertical lines (i, j, l); circles (a, c, e, o); lines and circles (b, d, g, h, m, n, p, q, s, u); all the perpendicular letters (f, r, t); and then the diagonal letters (k, v, w, x, y, z).

Remember, Signaling and Sounding the letters reinforces letter formation as well as the sounds of the letters.



11. **Simple Copy Work.** Copying a simple sentence off the board (the date, a short word list, information: "Tonight is Back To School Night," etc.) or a sentence from the *Zoo-phonics Level A Reader* will teach the students how to structure sentences. It is also an excellent exercise in eye tracking and eye/hand coordination. Use simple punctuation and capitalization as well as spelling.

Make sure that all your students can see the writing on the chalkboard clearly. If you have some who need to move closer, please allow them to do so.

*Variation:*

Write your text on a piece of paper and duplicate it, giving one per student for them to copy at their desks.

When starting with a pre-schooler or kindergartner, accept any squiggles or printing with joy. A parent or teacher can gently instruct, but the dangers of too much structure at this time are significant.

When the students are ready to write, letter formation must be taught gently. Watch your students carefully and determine who is ready for some handwriting instruction.

If the students have been “playing” with *Large Picture Cards* or the *Zoo-phonics® Animal Alphabet Letter Grids* (Picture or Merged), or the *Alphabet Magnets*, for even a short while, letter formation knowledge is already taking place. Because the children see the Animal shapes or the Animals on top of the letters, they will soon be able to replicate these shapes on paper.



Utilize the following student worksheets (graphic skills), journal pages, and editing sheets to begin the writing process.

*Note:* When creating seating charts at the beginning of the school year, make sure you seat those who cannot see the board clearly close to the front. For those students who are easily distracted or have problems with visual or auditory perception, also keep them close to the front. (See, “Reaching All Students” from the Zoo-phonics® Language Arts Manual for ideas on how to help students who may have delays or perceptual problems.)

Teacher Notes and Ideas:

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