

Comprehensive instruction  
for struggling writers



# What is *Writing Skills*?

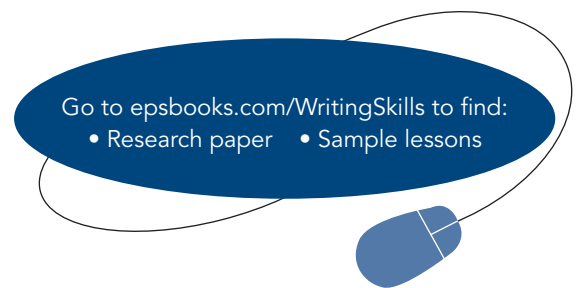
*Writing Skills*, by Diana Hanbury King, is a comprehensive writing program for beginning, struggling, at-risk, or reluctant writers. For these writers, this structured program provides an essential foundation in thinking and writing skills. For proficient and advanced writers, it offers strategies, techniques, and opportunities to apply them.

*Writing Skills* provides special instruction in spelling, handwriting, and keyboarding, and addresses important skills that many writing curricula take for granted. The series comprises:

- Four student books (A, 1, 2 and 3) providing detailed, step-by-step instruction in grammar, composition, mechanics, usage, and editing
- A comprehensive *Teacher's Handbook* with strategies for direct instruction
- Two cursive handwriting student books specially designed for both right- and left-handed students
- A keyboarding student book, utilizing a multisensory and kinesthetic approach that is especially effective for students with learning differences

## Writing Skills Grade Levels

- *Writing Skills* Book A — Grades 2–4
- *Writing Skills* Book 1 — Grades 5–6
- *Writing Skills* Book 2 — Grades 7–8
- *Writing Skills* Book 3 — Grades 9–12
- *Cursive Writing Skills* for Right-Handed Students — ungraded
- *Cursive Writing Skills* for Left-Handed Students — ungraded
- *Keyboarding Skills* — ungraded
- *Teacher's Handbook* — ungraded



## Research-Based Writing Instruction

Research shows that explicit instruction benefits both struggling and proficient writers. The *Writing Skills* series is based on the idea that students should not be so inhibited by grammar, spelling, or handwriting skills that they neglect the larger goal of self-expression. The program does not require that students master skills that were previously thought of as “fundamental” before progressing on to the “advanced” task of composition.

To view the research document for this series, visit [epsbooks.com/WritingSkills](http://epsbooks.com/WritingSkills)

## How can I fit *Writing Skills* into my curriculum?

*Writing Skills* is designed as a structured, comprehensive program for teaching the composition, grammar, and transcription skills necessary for effective writing. The series spans grades 2–12 and can be used in a variety of classroom settings. As a beginning writing program, *Writing Skills* provides step-by-step instruction in the foundational skills needed by students to become good writers, including grammar, sentence structure, paragraph composition, mechanics and usage, and transcription. For students with learning differences, reluctant writers, or at-risk students, *Writing Skills* helps build fluency and confidence and provides a variety of strategies and opportunities to apply them. *Writing Skills* is ideal for differentiated instruction and can serve as a comprehensive writing program in general classrooms, inclusion classrooms, and specialized settings.

## **Writing Skills student books include**

- A variety of strategies for organizing and prewriting, allowing students to record their thoughts and ideas before they begin writing
- Grammar and usage exercises integrated into writing instruction to help students write more efficiently and effectively
- Writing concepts illustrated by rules, examples, and model sentences, paragraphs, and essays to enhance understanding
- Carefully structured lessons that move students from simpler tasks such as sentence and paragraph writing to more complex essays
- High-utility writing forms and genres including letters, expository essays, outlining, summaries, and more
- Instruction closely aligned with state and national standards, giving struggling and reluctant writers the strategies they need to be successful in the general classroom

## **Writing Skills Teacher's Handbook includes**

- Explanations of how to teach writing through explicit instruction, models, and samples of student writing at various stages
- Detailed explanation of the proofreading and revising process and tips on how to help students revise their writing
- Writing prompts and activities organized by grade and genre, allowing for differentiated instruction
- Discussion of state and national standards and how to help students meet those standards in the general classroom
- Instructional guidelines for teaching spelling, spelling generalizations, and how to address spelling within the larger context of writing instruction
- Detailed instructions for transcription including proper cursive letter formation with verbal cues, proper grip and positioning, and keyboarding
- Reproducible assignment sheets, reference information, and planning tools for enhanced practice and instruction

## **Writing Skills handwriting and keyboarding books include**

- A kinesthetic, multisensory approach that is particularly effective for students with language-based learning differences
- Verbal cues to help students internalize letter formation and increase “motor memory”
- Instructions on proper pencil grip, paper position, and posture to help students transcribe more efficiently, *individualized for both right- and left-handed students*
- Keyboarding instruction that moves students quickly from individual letters to whole words, phrases, and connected text

## Skills Addressed

### Writing Skills Book A (Grades 2–4)

- Sentences
- Nouns and verbs
- Adjectives and adverbs
- Kinds of sentences
- Prewriting
- Basic paragraph structure
- Types of writing
- Answering short-answer and test questions
- Friendly and formal letters
- Revising and editing
- Writing from prompts

### Writing Skills Book 1 (Grades 5–6)

- Planning and prewriting
- Sentence structure and variety
- Grammar for writing
- Basic paragraph structure
- Expanding paragraphs
- Audience and purpose
- Types of writing
- Essays
- Editing and revising
- Writing from prompts

### Writing Skills Book 2 (Grades 7–8)

- Planning and prewriting
- Sentence structure and variety
- Grammar for writing
- Basic paragraph structure
- Expanding paragraphs
- Audience and purpose
- Types of writing
- Summarizing
- Essays
- Editing and revising
- Writing from prompts

### Writing Skills Book 3 (Grades 9–12)

- Sentence structure
- Expanding sentences
- Advanced grammar for writing
- Prewriting and making lists
- Basic paragraph structure
- Expanding paragraphs
- Types of writing
- Outlining
- Essays
- Editing and Revising

### Cursive Writing for Right-Handed Students

- Correct paper position, posture, and pencil grip for right-handed students
- Prewriting exercises
- Lowercase letters
- Joining lowercase letters
- Numerals
- Uppercase letters
- Joining uppercase to lowercase letters
- Writing practice and applications

### Cursive Writing for Left-Handed Students

- Correct paper position, posture, and pencil grip for left-handed students
- Prewriting exercises
- Lowercase letters
- Joining lowercase letters
- Numerals
- Uppercase letters
- Joining uppercase to lowercase letters
- Writing practice and applications

### Keyboarding Skills

- Home row keys
- Lowercase letters
- Uppercase letters
- Numbers
- Symbols and punctuation
- Writing applications

Grammar exercises are integrated throughout the series.

## SUBJECTS



A sentence has two main parts: the subject and the predicate.

**The subject** is who or what a sentence is about. The subject often starts the sentence.

Read the sentences below. You will see that each subject is circled.

My best friend likes spaghetti.

Our library has a new children's room.

These overalls are too big.

### → Exercise 1

Read the following sentences. Then find the subject in each sentence and circle it.

1. My dog comes when I whistle.
2. My uncle went to the store.
3. Tim always comes to class late.
4. The duck dived under the water.
5. That cup is chipped.

Step-by-step instruction breaks the writing process down into manageable steps and provides students with strategies to apply to their own writing.

## ADDING DETAILS



You can make your paragraphs more interesting by adding details. In this paragraph, the writer added details after the supporting sentences to give more information. The details are underlined.

### My Family's Pets

My family has several pets. We have a dog named Frisky. He has shiny black fur. He likes to play catch and can catch a Frisbee in the air. Last summer we got a kitten from the animal shelter. She is also black but has white paws. She likes to sleep on my bed. We also have a fish tank in our living room. The fish are small and brightly colored. When I feed them, they come rushing up to the surface. Having pets in the house makes me happy.

#### → Exercise 1

In the space below, copy the parts of the basic paragraph that are left when you take the details out.

T.S. \_\_\_\_\_

S.S. \_\_\_\_\_

S.S. \_\_\_\_\_

S.S. \_\_\_\_\_

C.S. \_\_\_\_\_

Aligned with state and national standards for language arts, the *Writing Skills* series teaches strategies and techniques for learning challenging concepts.

## Sentence Variety

Most sentences begin with a subject, but your writing is often more interesting if you begin your sentences in other ways. You might want to emphasize a word by putting it first in your sentence.

Compare:

Suddenly, the truck stopped.  
The truck stopped suddenly.

Yesterday, he arrived in the city.  
He arrived in the city yesterday.

The following words are useful for starting sentences, as they provide different kinds of information such as when, where, or why something happens. You can come back to this page if you need help beginning a sentence later on.

Anyone	Quickly	Yesterday
He	Finally	Below
Her	First	Beyond
His	Happily	By
My	Never	From
Nobody	Not	In
Our	Once	Into
She	Only	On
Their	Slowly	Out
They	Sometimes	Over
We	Soon	To
Your	Suddenly	Under
Always	Tomorrow	Up

**Prewriting, including brainstorming, making lists, and organizing ideas, is an important part of the writing process.**

## Prewriting

The first step in writing is developing your idea. Making lists is a good way to stretch your imagination while keeping your ideas organized.

### Exercise 1

Try to think of ten items for each list. The first one has been started for you.

1. Things to put in a sandwich

- cheese \_\_\_\_\_
- peanut butter \_\_\_\_\_
- lettuce \_\_\_\_\_
- tomato \_\_\_\_\_
- chicken \_\_\_\_\_

2. Things that cost under a dollar

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



**Reflecting best practices in writing instruction, each stage in the process is clearly and thoroughly modeled.**

Study this model essay. It was written from the expanded paragraph on page 101.

The Best Time of Year

introductory paragraph ← All winter and spring I look forward to summer. Summer is the best time of year. I enjoy the freedom, the warm weather, the swimming, and the chance to be with my friends. thesis statement  
plan

supporting paragraph 1 ← The first reason why I enjoy summer is that there is no school. I do not have to get up early in order to catch the bus. I can get up whenever I like, and I can take my time getting dressed and eating breakfast. I do not have to spend my evenings doing homework. For nearly three months I am free, not just on weekends, but every day.

supporting paragraph 2 ← Another reason why I enjoy summer is the warm weather. I do not have to bother with layers of warm clothes. I can wear just a t-shirt, sneakers, and shorts.

supporting paragraph 3 ← Yet another reason is that I can go swimming all summer. There is a public pool about a mile away, and I go there twice a week. Next year I hope to be on one of the swim teams.

supporting paragraph 4 ← The final reason why I enjoy summer so much is that I have plenty of time to spend with my friends. Sometimes they come to my house, but we usually meet at my friend Stacey's house, because she has the biggest yard. In the afternoons we go to the park, and in the evenings we play baseball until it gets dark.

concluding paragraph ← I wish it could always be summer, but if it were, I would have nothing to look forward to in fall, winter, and spring. There are advantages to having four seasons.

**Exercise 1**

Reread the essay above. Underline the topic sentence in each paragraph. Circle the transitions.

Direct instruction and modeling helps students master the types of writing required by standardized assessments.

### Persuasion

A persuasion paragraph is similar to a reason paragraph. In a persuasion paragraph, you will express an opinion and give your reader reasons to believe what you write. Good supporting reasons and details will show that your idea is valid, and will perhaps convince your reader to act on what you say.

Persuasive writing can involve all the expository techniques you have already studied. Choose the best method to express your opinion. Often the writer has a specific person or audience in mind—this determines the level of sophistication and the tone of the writing. You may need to do some research; gaining a thorough knowledge of your subject is the first step toward effectively persuading your reader.

✓ Read these persuasive paragraphs and complete the exercises that follow.

#### Why You Should Support Public Television and Radio

I support both public television and public radio for a number of reasons. I hate to have the programs I enjoy interrupted every few minutes by commercials. I enjoy expert discussion, not just summaries, of the news and current issues. I look forward to watching serious drama, ballet, and opera. I want my children to watch educational programs like *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street*. Above all, I love classical music and I want to be able to listen to my car radio as I drive to work. But public television and radio depend on private funding. Those of us who want to see things continue have a special obligation to support them at whatever level we can afford.

1. To what audience do you think the above paragraph is addressed? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The series presents grammar concepts for each stage of writing development, addressing common errors and editing strategies.

### Parallelism

Related ideas, in pairs or in a series, must be expressed in the same grammatical structure. For instance, do not mix gerunds and infinitives, nor adjectives with prepositional phrases.

✓ Study the following examples. Then correct the sentences in the exercise that follows. There may be several correct answers. Choose the one that seems best to you.

You have to be a certain age for voting and to drive.  
Correct: You have to be a certain age to vote and to drive.

There was dirt on the floor, the furniture was dusty, and the bed had not been made.  
Correct: The floor was dirty, the furniture was dusty, and the bed was unmade.

He read the paper and several letters were written by him.  
Correct: He read the paper and wrote several letters.

1. They enjoy hiking in the summer and to ski in the winter.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Mr. Lee's garden was damp, overgrown, and there were weeds.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. She had a headache, and her throat was sore.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. They asked that we leave the kitchen clean and to have the trash taken away.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. He resolved to study more, to take better notes, and that he would attend class regularly.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Strategies for direct instruction cover a variety of writing forms and give special consideration to diverse student needs.

### Narrative Writing

Narrative writing is required of students throughout their entire careers. Young students are often asked to "Tell about a time . . ." or write "What I did on my summer vacation." For the high school student, a job or school application will probably require a personal essay. Most state assessments include a narrative task.

Students will write best about what they have experienced, and though they will enjoy making up fantastical stories about outer space, their best writing will be based on their real-life adventures. Begin narrative writing with topics that students are likely to be familiar with. Though standardized tests will often ask students to write about events they have never experienced or are unfamiliar with, the more practice the student has in writing narratives, the better he is likely to perform on narrative tasks of all kinds.

There are many proven benefits to narrative writing. One benefit to practicing narrative writing is a greater understanding of order and organization. The beginner should write narratives in chronological, or time, order, but the more advanced writer can be taught to begin just before the climax and to fill the earlier events later. The use of dialogue or descriptive detail to make writing more vivid are other topics to pursue.

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*Students' best writing will be based on  
their real-life adventures.*

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When beginning narrative writing with young students and with struggling writers, ask them to first write down the main points, or five *Ws*. You can use the figure below as a checklist if students are having particular difficulty remembering. You may prefer to teach the five *Ws* in a different order, such as *when, where, who, what, and why*.

#### The Five Ws

- Who was involved?
  - What happened?
  - Where did it happen?
  - When did it happen?
  - Why was it important?
-

**Writing prompts span a wide range of grades and abilities and are organized by genre for easy reference.**

#### Writing Prompts for Grades 9–12

##### Example

- Consider the role automobiles play in our culture. What are the most important effects they have had? Write an essay explaining the influence the automobile has had on our culture.

##### Example/Reason

- From computers to entertainment to communication, technology affects everyone. Identify one advancement in technology that you could not do without and explain why.
- High school is a time when some students begin to look for part-time employment. What is a good part-time job for someone your age? Why would this job be appropriate for a teenager?
- High school students are faced with making decisions about the world of work. Choose a career that interests you. Explain why you would consider it, what preparation you would need, and what skills you would have to have in order to be successful.

##### Narrative

- New beginnings can take many forms. For many, a new beginning comes with the start of a new school year. For others, it could be moving to a new city or making a new friend. Write a narrative about a time you experienced a new beginning.
- You have just won a contest in which you get to spend a day with a famous person. Write about what you did and what you learned with the famous person you chose.

##### Persuasive

- You have just learned that NASA will select a student to accompany astronauts on their next space flight. Persuade NASA that either you or one of your classmates would be the best choice.
- Some state officials want to make the school year longer. Your local newspaper supports this idea. Decide whether you agree or disagree with this idea and write to the editor of the newspaper stating your opinion.

Reproducible planning templates, assessment tools, and word lists supplement instruction in the handbook and student books.

**Revision Checklist for Paragraphs**

- Is your audience and purpose clear?
- Do your paragraphs contain an introductory sentence, at least three supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence?
- Is your opening interesting? Will make your reader want to read more?
- Do your details give clear, interesting information about your topic? Are there any details that you should add? Are there any that you should delete?
- Does your conclusion express an opinion or attitude?
- Did you use complete sentences and a variety of sentence types?
- Are your adjectives and adverbs vivid?
- Is your paragraph in your best spelling and handwriting?

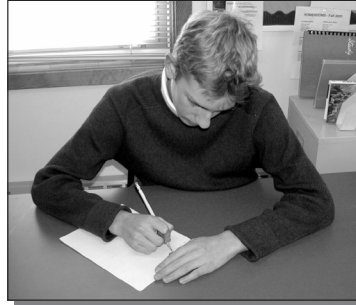
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**Left- and right-handed students learn how posture, paper position and pen grip improve handwriting.**

**To the Student**

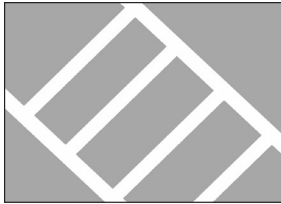
Before you can begin to improve your handwriting skills, check three important details: your posture, the position of your paper, and your grip on your pen or pencil.

Your posture is important. Be sure to sit up straight with both elbows on the desk and your feet on the floor. If you slouch, you cannot breathe deeply, and your brain thrives on oxygen. As you write, your left hand should rest at the top of the paper and move upward. It acts like the roller on a typewriter, allowing your right hand to remain in the same position on the desk. Both elbows should be on the desk all the time.



Correct Posture

Paper position is crucial. The paper must be slanted to the right and no less. As your hand swings across the paper, if the paper is slanted too much, the words will fall below the line. Strips of tape attached to the top edge of the paper maintain the correct position. Another trick, involve the left hand to hold the bottom corner of the paper and to keep it flat on the table.



Paper Position: Train Tracks

*Cursive Writing Skills*, Left-Handed and Right-Handed Editions, p. 47

**Uppercase letters are more difficult because they begin in many different places and directions. *Writing Skills* groups similar letters and models simplified versions, which are more likely to maintain their legibility.**

**Flag Letters**

These uppercase letters begin with a shape like a flag: 1.

B P R

Practice the flag letters. Draw the flag, then write the letter.

1 B

1 P

1 R

Practice these letters by writing the following words.

Best

Beauty

Blue

Boat

Bob

Rest

Rough

Run

Rabbit

Riddle

**Flag Letters**

These uppercase letters begin with a shape like a flag: 1.

B P R

Practice the flag letters. Draw the flag, then write the letter. Do this three times.

1 B

1 P

1 R

Practice these letters by writing the following words. Continue on the next page.

Best

Beauty

Blue

Boat

Bob

Rest

Rough

Run

Rabbit

Riddle

**Writing Skills provides practice in the 3 stages of cursive mastery:**

- copying from cursive model
- copying from print
- composition

Multisensory method of naming letters while typing helps students memorize position of keys.



and are home keys, all in a row.



Type two lines of these letters.

j k l    j k l    j k l    j k l    j k l    j k l  
j k l    j k l    j k l    j k l    j k l    j k l



Go back and put it all together. Type the letters A through L. Name the letters as you go.

a b c d e f g h i j k l  
a b c d e f g h i j k l  
a b c d e f g h i j k l  
a b c d e f g h i j k l  
a b c d e f g h i j k l

Students practice typing with punctuation marks, improving keyboarding skills and grammar.

Now you will learn the rest of the punctuation marks. You have already learned the period, comma, exclamation mark, and question mark.

Practice the colon (:) and semicolon (;) first. They are on the home key of your right pinky. You need to shift to type a colon.



Type two rows of colons and semicolons.

; : ; : ; : ; : ; : ; : ; :  
; : ; : ; : ; : ; : ; : ; :



Type these sentences using colons and semicolons.

- 1 We must hurry; the bus leaves in ten minutes.  
I am on the football team; my sister plays soccer.  
She is not here now; call back later.  
Today is Saturday; there is no school.
- 2 We need several things: paper, pencils, scissors, and string.  
The following students should stay: Peter, Sarah, and Jorge.  
We will leave at 7:30 and return at 12:00.

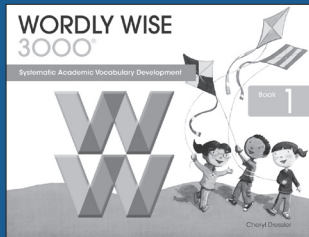
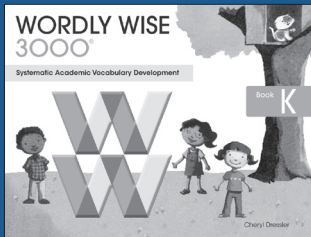
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**Grades K-1**

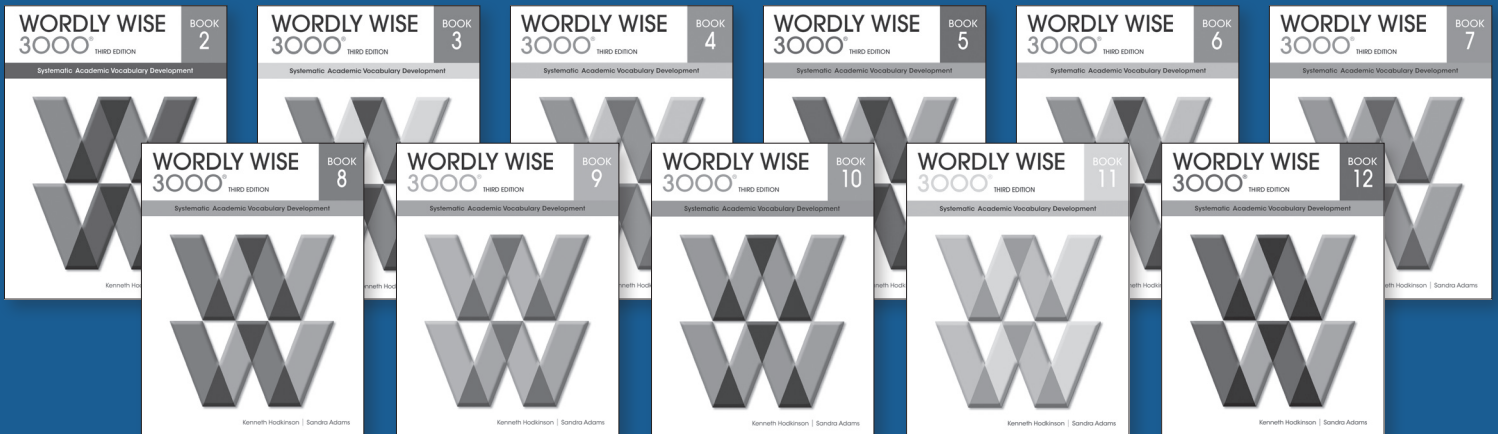
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