

# The Developmental Stages of Writing

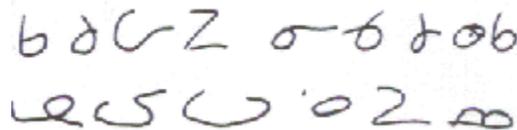
based on Richard Gentry's work

Writing is a process that develops gradually; with exploration and experimentation, children will acquire the diverse skills. Children may exhibit more than one stage in a single piece of writing because it is a process and stages are connected and will overlap. As they gain more experience with reading, too, the writing growth will accelerate. Reading and writing development go hand-in-hand.

**Scribbling.** Scribbling looks like random assortment of marks on a child's paper. Sometimes the marks are large, circular, and random, and resemble drawing. Although the marks do not resemble print, they are significant because the young writer uses them to show ideas.



**Letter-like Symbols.** Letter-like forms emerge, sometimes randomly placed, and are interspersed with numbers. The children can tell about their own drawings or writings. In this stage, spacing is rarely present.



**Strings of Letters.** In the strings-of-letters phase, students write some legible letters that tell us they know more about writing. Students are developing awareness of the sound-to-symbol relationship, although they are not matching most sounds. Students usually write in capital letters and have not yet begun spacing.

C H P F D P E 3 d P 4  
N C M S O 2 + d /

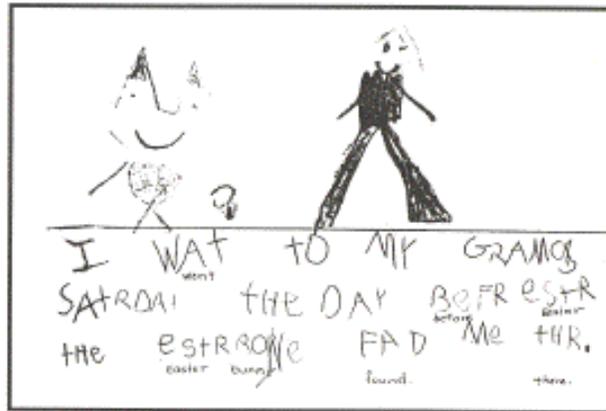
**Beginning Sounds Emerge.** At this stage, students begin to see the differences between a letter and a word, but they may not use spacing between words. Their message makes sense and matches the picture, especially when they choose the topic.



**Consonants Represent Words.** Students begin to leave spaces between their words and may often mix upper- and lowercase letters in their writing. They begin using punctuation and usually write sentences that tell ideas.



**Initial, Middle, and Final Sounds.** Students in this phase may spell correctly some sight words, siblings' names, and environmental print, but other words are spelled the way they sounds. Children easily hear sounds in words, and their writing is very readable.



**Transitional Phases.** This writing is readable and approaches conventional spelling. The students' writing is interspersed with words that are in standard form and have standard letter patterns.

I wl b hope wen skul iz t  
 I lk + pla wt mi fredz in te  
 Sumr tatz l+2 OV fn

**Standard Spelling.** Students in this phase can spell most words correctly and are developing an understanding of root words, compound words, and contractions. This understanding helps students spell similar words.

Once upon a time a dog named Rags got lost  
 in the woods. All of the people looked for him  
 After a while he found his way home again.  
 His family was very happy.