

BASIC CONCEPTS & “KEY WORD” OUTLINES

1. Most children who dislike writing have difficulty partly because they “don’t know what to write about.”
2. Being able to think of something to write about should not be a prerequisite for learning how to write.
3. Writing is a complicated process; spelling, handwriting and composition are entirely different neurological functions. For a child who has difficulty with writing, this complexity must be broken into small manageable pieces.
4. Imitation, as a critical part of learning anything, it is not only OK, but is actually the best way to begin learning to write.
5. If the child doesn’t have to worry about WHAT to write, he can learn HOW to write. As the child gradually gains confidence and competence, he becomes more comfortable with the task of determining “what to write.”
6. Using a “source text” allows the student to “get content” for writing, while reviewing content from subjects such as history, science, Bible, literature, geography, etc. Writing should be a *part of* the study of these subjects rather than a “subject” unto itself.
7. Just as Benjamin Franklin took “short hints of the sentiment of each sentence,” to teach himself to write, our students can use “key word outlines” to help them get started with writing from simple source texts.
8. Source text can be fiction or non-fiction. Aesop’s fables work well. Material should be at or below the reading level of the child. Selections of 4-7 sentences are ideal. Try one from a short Aesop’s fable:

The Fox and the Goat

By an unlucky chance, a Fox fell into a deep well from which he could not escape. A Goat passed by, and asked the Fox what he was doing down there. “Oh, have you not heard?” said the Fox, “there is going to be a great drought, so I came down here in order to be sure to have water by me. Why don’t you come down too?” The Goat thought this a good idea, and jumped down into the well. But the Fox immediately sprang on to her back, and by putting his foot on her long horns, managed to hop up to the edge of the well. “Good-bye, friend,” said the Fox, “remember, be careful of the advice of one who is in

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