

Picture Story, Word Story

Children Describe their Pictures in Writing

- **Overview.** The purpose of picture story, picture word (PS/PW) is for children to practice expressing themselves in writing—at whichever of the five stages of spelling development they find themselves.
- (PS/PW) provides children practice and comfort at their own level and supports their progression to the next stage of writing.
- The PS/PW activity can be administered to whole class or smaller groups.
- **Process.** First, have the children fold a sheet of paper in half horizontally.
- In the top half of the paper, children draw their picture story.
- In the bottom half of the paper, children write their word story.
- The word story is a description of what is illustrated above. Depending on the child's developmental writing level, this account might be a series of squiggles and attempts at letters, phonetic inventive spelling, or conventionally spelled sentences.
- **Guiding Growth.** Correct spelling is not the focus; guide the child to attach the sound to the symbol (What is the middle sound you hear in “person”? What letter represents that sound? How do you write an “r”? You got it!)
- To encourage growth, children are guided towards the next level. (Yes. You are showing all the sounds—Your audience can read it, no problem. But let's look at the dictionary spelling.) Adjust according to each child's needs, attention span, and writing experience.
- Children read their sentences aloud. If words are not recognizable, take the dictation on the back of the page or on a sticky note.
- When reading your conventionally spelled dictation back to children, demonstrate proper tracking left to right, and encourage use of a period at sentence end.

EI 2.1a Fine Motor Tool; 6.1 Conversational Ability; 8.3 Writing; 27.1 Focus

Please note: This Picture Story/Word Story PS/PW activity is developmentally appropriate for a 4-year-old child who has begun to write. And it may be developmentally appropriate for a 3-year-old child who wants to describe their picture using mock letters and scribbles.

Example activities: The full progression of writing development is appropriate and appreciated. [BG1][BG2]

- Provide time for children to write freely in journals, as a choice.
- Encourage children to draw on the top and write on the bottom of a sheet of paper.
- **Assure**[BG3] children that all levels of writing are great.
- Provide children the opportunity to dictate stories to adults. Children can write their name and important words. The adult reads back the child's story, pointing at each word and hesitating at junctures to allow the author to supply the word.



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Five Stages of Spelling Development

STAGES OF SPELLING DEVELOPMENT

PRECOMMUNICATIVE

LR2BTN

SEMIPHONETIC

I LK DG
(I like dogs)

PHONETIC

I lik dagz
(I like dogs)

TRANSITIONAL

I liek dogz
(I like dogs)

CONVENTIONAL

I like dogs



THE CLASSROOM KEY



Precommunicative Stage: The child uses alphabetic symbols but with no knowledge of letter-sound correspondence. Have the child say the sentence aloud while writing letter-like squiggles or marks (or just wavy lines horizontally in a scribble). End with a period.

Semiphonetic Stage: The child begins to understand letter-sound correspondence, that sounds are assigned to letters. Have the child say the words aloud, emphasizing beginning sounds.

Phonetic Writing: The child uses a letter or group of letters to represent every speech sound they hear. "Say the sounds as you write." Assist the child to emphasize the beginning and ending sounds. Encourage the child to think aloud as they say the word and choose the letters. As they progress, they can use capital and lower case letters with a period.

Transitional Stage: The child begins to incorporate conventional alternatives for representing sounds, moving from a dependence on letter sounds alone, remembering visual representations for irregular spelling.

Conventional Writing Stage: The child knows the English orthographic system and its basic rules— silent letters, affixes, irregular spellings. "This is how grown-ups write; it is dictionary spelling."

References:

Lutz, E. (1986). *Invented Spelling and Spelling Development*. Retrieved from (<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/invented-spelling-and-spelling-development>)

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PED. (2019). *New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines*.

Puranik, C. S., & Lonigan, C. J. (2009). From scribbles to scrabble: preschool children's developing knowledge of written language. *Reading and Writing*, 24(5), 567-589. doi:10.1007/s11145-009-9220-8

Spelling for More Effective Instruction retrieved from [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com) (The five stages of spelling development visual)