

Type One Writing

Definition: Type One writing is informal writing with the emphasis on generating ideas, exploring, and recalling, rather than on right or wrong answers; it is the "getting ideas on paper" phase of the thinking and writing process.

Description: Type One writing activities are brief, informal, writing experiences where the main goal is to have students do some thinking on paper. Type One writing is similar to two frequently used thinking and writing strategies: brainstorming and journal writing.

Type One writing is like brainstorming because there are usually no right or wrong answers in this type of writing. The goal is to have students write about experiences, preferences, recollections, suggestions, predictions, questions, or other ideas without fear of being wrong. But, unlike class brainstorming discussions, *all* students are actively involved because each student is writing.

Type One writing is like journal writing because the emphasis is on thinking, not on correctness. These writing experiences offer young writers a low-risk environment where they can take chances in their writing and begin to develop confidence with the written language. Like journal writing, frequent use of Type One writing builds students' fluency as they develop the sense that "If I can say it, I can write it."

I am often asked how journal writing fits into the Five Types of Writing framework. I consider journal writing a valuable form of Type One writing. Type One writing, however, includes more than the usual free-writing type of journal writing. It also includes directed quick-writes that can be linked to a story, lesson, field trip, or science experiment. Type One writing describes a broader range of low-risk writing experiences than journal writing.

Uses: Type One writing is so powerful because it has nearly unlimited utility. Its uses range from free-writing to directed writing, from personal or story writing to reflections on content-area learning. These writing activities take virtually no time to prepare, require little class time, and can be quickly assessed. Best of all, they can be linked to all types of learning experiences.

For example, Type One writing can be used for *recalling and assessing prior knowledge*. At the beginning of a new learning unit on Earth and the solar system, the teacher might ask students to do a piece of Type One writing to help assess what the children know or want to know about the solar system: "Before we begin talking about the solar system, I want each of you to think about what you already know about our solar system — information, interesting facts, even questions you'd like to have answered. I want you to write those ideas down. In the next five minutes, I want you to write at least six lines about the solar system, including questions you have."

The teacher has accomplished several key objectives. By using Type One writing as a prelude to class discussion, she has gotten all students engaged in thinking about the topic and has begun to activate their prior knowledge. Everyone's "motor is running," and there is physical evidence of that in the form of the Type One writing.

She has also ensured that each student has something to contribute to the ensuing class discussion ("Who had a question about the solar system that we might want to research?" or "Ramon, tell us one of the facts that you wrote down."). Moreover, the teacher can quickly assess what the students already know and what they would like to know. The teacher may even want to summarize the discussion on chart paper by organizing the responses into three categories of ideas: facts about the solar system, questions, and miscellaneous.

Type One writing can be used for *stating preferences and opinions or making predictions*. For example, prior to a discussion in which you want students to compare and contrast characters in a story, a quick Type One writing may help generate ideas: "Explain to me which of Charlotte's barnyard friends you would want as a best friend. Think about it for a minute, and then tell me in five lines or more." Or as a way to focus on predicting outcomes of stories, students can be asked to write their predictions: "Before we finish this story, I'd like you to write down how you think the story will end." With Type One writing, you get a response from all students — not just those called on in class discussion.

There are many other ways to use Type One writing: for *solving problems* ("How would you solve the problem you see in this picture?"); for *reflecting on content learning* ("What is your favorite activity in math?"); for *processing experiences* ("What did you enjoy the most about painting the mural with your teammates?"); or as a *prewriting activity* for any of a number of writing experiences (as a way to introduce important elements of persuasive writing: "Tell me about a time you had to change someone's mind. How did you convince that person to agree with you?").

Remember, the goal of Type One writing is to engage students in thinking about a topic or idea and getting those ideas down on paper. In doing so, we not only promote thinking, but we also help students develop writing fluency.

Format: Type One writing requires just one draft. Students only need to put their name on the first line, right-hand side, and "Type One" on the first line, left-hand side of their papers. They should write on every other line. (This skip-a-line technique is suggested for all five types of writing. Skip-a-line papers are much easier to read and allow the writer sufficient room to make edits or revisions in a way that is neat and easy to read. Typically, students make few revisions to Type One or Type Two papers, but asking them to write on every other line reinforces the skip-a-line habit.)

Form: Type One writing can take almost any form — lists, sentences, even sketches. This type of writing can focus on (or contain a mixture of) facts, opinions, hypotheses, or questions. The form will be determined by the purpose of the writing, whether it is to predict, give an opinion, solve a problem, or do some critical thinking. Many teachers establish a notebook or learning log for daily writing such as journal writing and Type One writing. The notebook can be bound writing books (such as spelling blanks or composition books), three-ring binders, stapled packets of writing paper, or anything the teacher can devise.

A notebook or learning log makes it easy for teachers to integrate writing into classroom learning experience: "Before I give you your magnet, take out your notebook and write down for me which items on your tray you think the magnet will pick up." With a notebook, the teacher does not have to interrupt the lesson to pass out paper. Writing becomes a natural part of the learning activity.

Evaluation: Type One writing assignments typically take very little class time — usually ten minutes or less — and they need not take a lot of time to evaluate. An important goal of Type One writing is to engage students in thinking about a topic, idea, or question and have them write their thoughts. A typical criterion is that every child must write something. Simply stated criteria are best, such as a number of written lines ("Write five lines on things you know or questions you have about whales.") or writing for a specified period of time ("For the next two minutes, tell me about your favorite television program."). These criteria are clear to students and easy to assess. Feedback is usually given in the form of a checkmark (✓), OK, or rubber stamp used by the teacher.

On the following pages are four examples of Type One writing. In Example A, the student was asked to write about a real-life experience when he had to solve a problem. He has written on the topic, has a relevant example, and receives appropriate feedback.

EXAMPLE A

Good Charles
March 24
I + was a fight
I had to stop
I + I side
don't fight again
If you do
I will tell your
mom's and they
stop I + right then.

In Example B, a first grader has been asked to explain how she thinks Clifford (the large canine featured in Norman Bridwell's popular series of books) got to be so large. Danielle does an excellent job of proposing several reasons why he grew so large.

EXAMPLE B

Type 1 ☺ I like your ideas!
Danielle
March 29
x How Clifford got Big
x He eat to mac + food
x And got to mac + Sleep
x And maby got to mac
x X srsias and he was big
x He was a baby and samal
x Maby he was the biggis
x Baby in his famale
x Maby on his frs bhadayhen
x Sixe

Type One writing fits any curriculum area. Example C shows Type One writing from a student who was asked, before a class trip to hear the symphony, to write for four minutes about things he already knew about the symphony and questions he would like to get answered. Jason, a fifth-grade student, has a number of good questions — and some knowledge to build on.

EXAMPLE C

Type 1 ✓ Jason

X Symphony Orchestra has very soft
X music. And it has violins, piano, and lots
X of other stuff. How long does it take
X to rehearse? Is there a lot of money given?
X How do they get use to that weird
X music? When do they rest during the
X symphony? How long is a symphony?
X They have them everywhere in the
X United States. Why can't anyone
X sing?

In Example D, a fourth-grade student is asked to write four lines or more in his journal about his feelings about mathematics — what he enjoys and what is hard for him. The teacher gives Nicholas a checkmark — and learns that Nicholas does not yet see any real world applications of fractions.

EXAMPLE D

type 1

Nicholas

- X Fractions are hard. All shows numbers.
- X most on them are easy. They've got
- X hundreds and tenths of things. Some-
- X times I don't like them. I've never
- X had to use them, I've only used
- X them in tests



$$\frac{12}{20}$$

The important thing to remember is that Type One writing is not polished writing to be shared with a broad audience. It is "thinking on paper." Neither the writing experience nor the evaluation should take a great deal of time. The goal is to use Type One writing often to help students develop writing fluency, the foundation of an effective writing program.

EXAMPLE A

Type One



Joe Smith

1 Siberia is one of 11 states that used

2 to make up the Soviet Union. It is a cold

3 poor country that has a few oil sources.

4 What are some political leaders? What are

5 the people like? What do they eat? (fish?)

6 What is their financial status? What is

7 their currency. What are activities kids

8 do to pass the time? What is their schooling

9 like? What are some problems that face

10 the region? What are current things

11 happening. What are some cities? What

12 famous people are from Siberia? Would

13 they rather live in the US? Why?

14

Ideas for Using Type One Assignments Across the Curriculum

Type One Writing - for engaging students and getting them to think; no right or wrong answer; quick and simple evaluation (✓ or -) based on number of lines written.

For activating prior knowledge:

- In eight lines or more (or five or ten lines—depending on the time you want to take), write the things you know, things you think you know, or questions you have about _____.
- Even though we have not read or discussed it yet, what does the term (or concept or phrase) _____ mean to you?
- What do you think this (picture, formula, abbreviation, notation, chart, word, mark, phrase) means? Why do you think so?
- What do you think a _____ looks like?
- How do you think a _____ behaves (or is solved or is constructed)?

For reflecting:

- Based on today's discussion, do a 3-2-1 reflection. Write down three things you found interesting, two things that were a bit confusing, and one thing you would like to know more about.
- When you think about _____, what are some of the things you wonder about?
- Write down two "hard" questions about _____.
- What part of yesterday's discussion about _____ would you find difficult to explain clearly to someone else?
- In last night's homework, what was the hardest part for you to solve (or understand, complete, read, collect)?
- If you were going to solve (or do or read or study) _____ again, what would you do differently?
- What went well with your group project (or experiment or performance)? What would improve the group's work?

- As you think about what we did in class today, what was easiest (or most fun, most challenging, something you would like to do again differently)?
- Before we go on this field trip (or conduct this experiment, study this unit, solve these problems), what are some of the things you hope to find out?
- What are other ways we can get the same result (or solution, answer, outcome)?
- What tools (or formulas, instruments, reference materials) do you think were used to accomplish this?

For making connections:

- What relationship does _____ have to current events/daily life at school or home?
- How do you think _____ and _____ are related? Explain.
- How is this type of problem (or historical event, story, concept) similar to another type of problem (or historical event, story, concept)?

For thinking about learning:

- For the upcoming test, what question might I ask that would require a short written answer (as opposed to a multiple choice, true/false, or matching answer)?
- Think about the test you just completed and how you prepared for it. What should you have spent more time studying? Less time? Why?
- Describe something that you can do better now than you could last year.
- When I teach this unit on _____ to next year's class, what do you think I could do to make it better?

For creative thinking:

- Describe a way of doing this routine task (such as reviewing homework, passing out lab materials, distributing calculators, signing out instruments or supplies) so that it would be more interesting or efficient.
- What if electricity emitted sound waves (or numbers 0-10 had assigned colors, copying machines did not exist, houses could not be built with right angles, and so on)? What would life be like?

TYPE ONE

Advantages

- Spontaneous--requires little preparation by teacher
- Takes little class time to complete
- Very easy to evaluate, produces effort or participation grade
- Provides opportunity for all students to stop and think--to review prior knowledge, to develop questions
- When used before instruction, provides opportunity for teacher to assess student knowledge and make decisions about what to teach
- Special advantage to quiet, less verbal students
- Promotes writing fluency

Disadvantages

- Does not directly improve specific writing skills (sentence variety, organization, word choice, etc.)