

Writer's Handbook

When should I use a capital letter?

The first word of a sentence always begins with a capital letter.

The kitten jumped into my lap.

The word **I** is always spelled with a capital letter.

Kristen and **I** laughed at the kitten.

The name of a person or an animal always begins with a capital letter.

The kitten belongs to **K**risten.

The kitten's name is **M**eep.

Other kinds of names also begin with capital letters. Here are some examples:

streets: **M**artin **A**venue **J**effers **R**oad

schools: **J**ackson **E**lementary **S**chool

towns and cities: **M**edford **R**ome

states: **W**isconsin **G**eorgia

countries: **C**anada **I**taly

holidays: **L**abor **D**ay

days and months: **T**uesday **J**uly

clubs and groups: **C**ub **S**couts **V**alley **G**arden **C**lub

companies: **D**oggie **D**ay **C**are **F**oster **P**aint **C**ompany

What are the rules about sentences?

A sentence must always tell a complete thought.

Complete thought: She meowed.

Complete thought: The kitten yawned and rolled over.

Not a complete thought: She again.

Not a complete thought: Around and around her.

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A sentence always begins with a capital letter.

Carry the kitten carefully.

A sentence always ends with an end mark. There are three kinds of end marks. A sentence that tells something ends with a period.

The kitten is soft.

A sentence that asks something ends with a question mark.

Is the kitten soft?

A sentence that shows excitement or fear ends with an exclamation point.

The kitten scratched me!

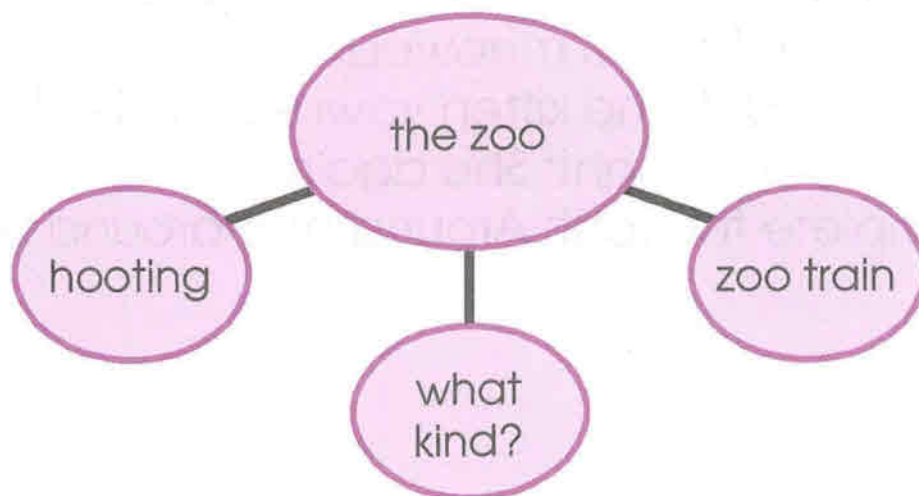
What is the writing process?

Writers use five steps when they write. These steps make up the writing process.

Step 1: Prewrite

First, writers think up ideas. This is called **prewriting**. They might write their ideas in a list. They might even make a chart and put their ideas in order.

Sam will write about his trip to the zoo. He put his ideas in a web.



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Step 2: Draft

Next, writers put their ideas on paper. This is called a **first draft**. Writers know that there might be mistakes. That's okay. Most writers do not get everything perfect on the first try.

Here is Sam's first draft.

Zoo Noises

Every time I go, I learn something new. I went to the zoo three times last year. last week, I learned that there are many noises at the zoo. There was a funny hooting sound. I asked what kind that was. Then, my brother told me it was the train whistle. I felt pretty silly. I wonder what I will learn next time I go to the zoo.

Step 3: Revise

Then, writers change or fix their first draft. This is called **revising**. They might move ideas around or add information. They might take out words or sentences that don't belong. Here are the changes that Sam made.

Zoo Noises

Every time I go, ^{to the zoo} I learn something new. ~~I went to the zoo three times last year.~~ last week, I learned that there are many noises at the zoo. There was a funny hooting sound. I asked what kind ^{of animal} that was. Then, my brother told me it was the train whistle. I felt pretty silly. I wonder what I will learn next time I go to the zoo.

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Step 4: Proofread

Writers usually write a new copy so their writing is neat. Then, they look again to make sure everything is correct. They look for mistakes in their sentences. This is called **proofreading**.

Sam wrote a new copy. Then, he found two last mistakes.

Zoo Noises

Every time I go to the zoo, I learn something new. ^Llast week, I learned that there are many strange noises at the zoo. I heard a funny hooting sound. I asked what kind of animal that was. Then, my brother told me it was the train whistle. I felt pretty silly. I wonder what I will learn next time I go to the zoo.

Step 5: Publish

Finally, writers make a final copy that has no mistakes. They are now ready to share their writing with a reader. They might choose to read their writing out loud. They can add pictures and create a book. There are many ways for writers to **publish**, or share, their work with readers.

Here is the final copy of Sam's writing about the zoo.

Zoo Noises

Every time I go to the zoo, I learn something new. Last week, I learned that there are many strange noises at the zoo. I heard a funny hooting sound. I asked what kind of animal that was. Then, my brother told me it was the train whistle. I felt pretty silly. I wonder what I will learn next time I go to the zoo.

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What different kinds of writing are there?

Writers sometimes write about things they have done or seen. They might tell about something funny, sad, or unusual. When Sam wrote about what he saw at the zoo, he was writing about real things that he did and saw.

Look at Sam's zoo story again.

The word **I** shows that the writer was part of the action.

Zoo Noises

Every time I go to the zoo, I learn something new. Last week, I learned that there are many strange noises at the zoo. I heard a funny hooting sound. I asked what kind of animal that was. Then, my brother told me it was the train whistle. I felt pretty silly. I wonder what I will learn next time I go to the zoo.

A time-order word shows the order of events.

Describing words help readers "see" or "hear" what is happening.

The writer stayed on topic. All of the sentences give more information about a zoo noise.

Writers sometimes write about made-up things. They might write about people or animals. The people and animals might seem real, but the writers made them up. Here is a made-up story that Shawn wrote.

Time-order words help keep ideas in order.

Shawn's Zoo

Shawn wants to be a zookeeper. Right now, he keeps small animals. He pretends that his mice and his cat are zoo animals.

Some day, he will keep big animals. He watches his gray mice running on their little wheel. At his zoo, Shawn will teach elephants to run on a big wheel. His cat chases a ball. At Shawn's zoo, the lions will play soccer against the tigers.

Shawn has lots of ideas for his zoo. He thinks his zoo will be a great zoo.

Describing words help readers "see" what is happening.

Shawn's readers will have fun reading his ideas.

The writer stayed on topic. All of the sentences give more information about a made-up zoo.

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Writers sometimes write about how to do things. They might tell how to play a game or make a snack. Sam has a favorite snack. He wrote about how to make it.

The steps are all in order, starting with the items needed to make the snack.

Order words help readers keep the steps in order.

Cracker-Cheese Surprise

First, set out wheat crackers, sliced olives, sliced cheese, and a metal pie plate. Lay out some crackers in the pie plate. Then, place one olive slice on each cracker. Place one slice of cheese on top of each cracker. Finally, ask a grown-up to set the pie plate under a broiler. Heat just until the cheese bubbles. Have the grown-up remove plate from broiler and let cool for several minutes. At last, you get to enjoy your healthy snack.

Clear words help readers understand what to do.

Writers sometimes write to describe things. They might tell about an object, a place, or an event. They use good sense, or describing, words so that readers can see, hear, smell, feel, or taste whatever is being described. Read how Sam described his snack.

Sizzle helps readers hear what is happening.

Warm helps readers know how the snack feels.

I can tell when my snack is done because I hear a little sizzle from the oven. When my mom opens the broiler door, the cheese is bubbly. I can hardly wait for the crackers to cool. When I take a bite, the cracker crunches and the warm cheese stretches out in a long string like taffy. And then, that salty little olive slice is just waiting to surprise me. Yum!

Bubbly helps readers see what is happening.

Salty helps readers taste the snack.

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Writers write friendly letters to share news or ideas. They also write letters to get information. A friendly letter has four parts: the date, the greeting, the body, and the closing. Here is a letter Sam wrote to a friend about something that happened at the zoo.

Words in the greeting each begin with a capital letter.

There is always a comma after the person's name.

The date is in the upper, right corner.



August 26

Dear Kyle,

Last week, while you were at camp, we went to the zoo. We had a great time.

The best part was the elephants. Did you know that elephants love to take baths? The elephant keeper was spraying a hose at the elephants. The water shot up in a big spout. The elephants stood under the water just as if they were taking a shower. Then, one of them started to dance. Before long, all three of them were dancing in the shower!

It's only a week until school starts. I'll show you my dancing elephant pictures on the first day of school.

Your friend,
Sam

The body of the letter gives information.

Only the first word of the closing begins with a capital letter. There is always a comma after the closing.

The writer signs his or her name.