

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS GUIDEBOOK
GRADES K-5

NORTH SHORE SCHOOLS

Introduction

This grammar guide is intended to help parents be aware of the skills that their children are expected to know, as their children are editing their writing at home.

First, however, it is important to put this guide in the context of how children learn to write:

1. Writing is about communication. Students should understand that the purpose of writing is to communicate effectively with other people.
2. Since every piece of writing is a child's attempt to communicate with others, a parent should respond first to the CONTENT of what the child has written. Please show your child that you are interested in what (s)he has to say. Students are motivated to write when they are excited to share something.
3. Students are learning many skills and strategies as writers, including how to write an interesting lead and a strong conclusion, how to develop ideas with evidence or details, etc. It is a lot to think about at once! Checking their grammar and spelling may be a final editing step.
4. When a baby learns to speak, he does so by successive approximations ("Ma- Mama- Mommy- Mother"). A child learning the rules of the English language also will try some new skills but be imperfect with them at first. This is normal, and any attempt to try something new should be celebrated, even if it is not perfectly executed.
5. "Teach the writer, not the piece of writing." If you do remind your child of something they may have learned by now, pick only *one* thing to share at a time. The goal should be to help your child carry that skill forward into all future writing, not to make sure that this one piece of writing is error-free. Your child's teacher will use any errors to know what to teach your child next.
6. All students progress at different paces. This guide shares when your child first will be introduced to certain grammar concepts. Different children will master them at different times.
7. Our emphasis is on how to use grammar in writing, not on what to call it. (E.g., A child may understand when to use *a* instead of *the*, but not know the term "indefinite article.")
8. Enjoy reading what your child has to say. Enjoy celebrating your child's growth as a writer. Thank you for being a partner to your child's teacher in this process.

KINDERGARTEN SKILLS

Start of Kindergarten: It is all new to your child! There are not yet any expectations for what your child will know about grammar. The best question at this point is, “Does that sound right?” You are helping your child to become aware that language is predictable. (S)he has internalized some rules of language from hearing it, even if (s)he cannot yet explain those rules.

By the second half of kindergarten, children will have learned the following information, but may not be able to apply it on their own yet:

- a. Writers capitalize the first word in a sentence and the pronoun “I.”
- b. There are punctuation marks at the end of sentences.
- c. There are times to use a period vs. a question mark vs. an exclamation point.

By the end of kindergarten, children will have learned to:

- a. Use ending punctuation in their own writing.
- b. Edit their work for capitals and ending punctuation marks.
- c. Use complete sentences.
- d. Revise their writing, expanding sentences to add descriptive language and details.
- e. Write questions using interrogatives (*who, what, where, when, why, how*).

FIRST GRADE SKILLS

Start of First Grade: Children can apply what they have learned in kindergarten.

By the second half of first grade, children will have learned to:

- a. Write and expand complete sentences.
- b. Use singular and plural nouns with matching verbs in basic sentences (e.g., He *hops*. We *hop*).
- c. Use adjectives (*red, tall, soft, etc.*)
- d. Use personal, possessive, and indefinite pronouns.
(examples of personal pronouns: *I, you, he, she, it, we, they, me, him, her, us, them*)
(examples of possessive pronouns: *my, mine, our, ours, its, his, her, hers, their, theirs, your, yours.*)
(examples of indefinite pronouns: *all, another, any, anybody/anyone, anything, each, everybody/everyone, everything, few, many, nobody, no one, one, several, some, somebody/someone*)
- e. Begin to explore how to use common, proper, and possessive nouns (example of a possessive noun: *mother's*). Understand how an apostrophe is used in a possessive singular noun.

By the end of first grade, children will have learned to:

- a. Use conjunctions (*and, but, or, because*).
- b. Use verbs to convey a sense of past, present and future (e.g., “Yesterday I *walked* home. Today I *walk* home. Tomorrow I *will walk* home.”).
- c. Use determiners (e.g., articles: *the, a, an, no*; demonstratives: *this, that, these, those*).
- d. Use frequently occurring prepositions (e.g., *on, in, to, from, about, after, before, with, during, beyond, toward, except*).
- e. Use commas in dates and to separate single words in a series.

SECOND GRADE SKILLS

Start of Second Grade: Children can apply what they have learned through the end of first grade.

By the second half of second grade, children will have learned to:

- a. Use common irregular past tense verb forms (e.g., *sat, was*).
- b. Capitalize holidays, product names, and geographic names.
- c. Use reflexive pronouns (e.g., *myself, ourselves*).
- d. Use an apostrophe to form contractions (e.g., *don't*) and frequently occurring possessives (e.g., my ***sister's*** toy).
- e. Use collective nouns (e.g., *group, class, family, audience*).
- f. Use some common irregular plural forms of nouns; understand that some nouns use -s or -es for the plural, but other nouns have irregular plural forms (e.g, *feet, children, teeth, mice, fish*).
- g. Use adjectives (e.g, *slow*) and adverbs (e.g., *slowly*).

By the end of second grade, children will have learned to:

- a. Produce, expand and rearrange complete simple and compound sentences (e.g., "The boy watched the movie. Then he ate dinner." "After the little boy watched the action movie, he ate turkey and mashed potatoes.") Sentences can be expanded or rearranged to make a story more vivid or powerful.
- b. Use commas in greetings and closings of letters.
- c. Use everything they know about grammar and edit their writing for these features using a checklist.

THIRD GRADE SKILLS

Start of Third Grade: Children can apply what they have learned through the end of second grade.

By the second half of third grade, children will have learned to:

- a. Capitalize titles.
- b. Use quotation marks in dialogue (e.g., “Sit down,” said Mother.).
- c. Use superlative and comparative adjectives with the suffixes *-er* and *-est* (e.g., *faster*, *fastest*).
- d. Join clauses using conjunctions (e.g., We went to the movies, and Dad bought us popcorn.).

By the end of third grade, children will have learned to:

- a. Edit their writing to ensure subject-verb agreement (e.g., My *dog eats*. *Basketballs roll* across the floor.).
- b. Edit their writing to ensure pronoun-antecedent agreement (e.g., *Father* wore **his** boots).
- c. Make grammatical choices as writers.
- d. Use everything learned until now about grammar and edit their writing for these features using a checklist.

FOURTH GRADE SKILLS

Start of Fourth Grade: Children can apply what they have learned through the end of third grade.

By the second half of fourth grade, children will have learned to:

- a. Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons.
- b. Use commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotations from a text.
- c. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence (e.g., I like classical music, *but* I also like rock and roll).
- d. Use paragraphs to organize their ideas. Indent for the start of a new paragraph.
- e. Distinguish between formal and informal language when writing, speaking, reading and/or listening.

By the end of fourth grade, children will have learned to:

- a. Form and use the progressive verb tenses (e.g., *I was walking; I am walking; I will be walking*).
- b. Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., *to, too, two; there, their*).
- c. Use relative pronouns (*who, whose, whom, which, that*) and relative adverbs (*where, when, why*).
- d. Use modal auxiliaries (e.g., *can, may, must*) to convey various conditions.
- e. Order adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns (e.g., a *small red bag* rather than a *red small bag*).
- f. Form and use prepositional phrases (e.g., *at home, with me, in the refrigerator*).
- g. Write making stylistic choices to convey ideas precisely.
- h. Use punctuation for effect.
- e. Use everything they know about grammar and edit their writing for these features using a checklist.

FIFTH GRADE SKILLS

Start of Fifth Grade: Children can apply what they learned through the end of fifth grade.

By the second half of fifth grade, children will have learned to:

- a. Use punctuation to separate items in a series.
- b. Use a comma to set off the words yes and no (e.g., Yes, thank you), to set off a tag question from the rest of the sentence (e.g., It's true, isn't it?), and to indicate direct address (e.g., Is that you, Steve?).
- c. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense.
- d. Underline, quote, and italicize the titles of works when they are citing research.

By the end of fifth grade, children will have learned to:

- a. Vary sentence structure.
- b. Write more complex sentences by using conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections.
- c. Use correlative conjunctions (e.g., *either/or*, *neither/nor*).
- d. Compare and contrast the varieties of English used in stories, dramas, or poems (e.g., dialects, registers).
- e. Notice an author's use of language and comment on it in their reading notebooks or post-its.
- f. Apply the grammar conventions they have learned to their daily writing and make grammatical choices that suit their intentions as a writer.
- f. Use everything they know about grammar and edit their writing for these features using a checklist.