

Writing: A Means of Expression and An Academic Requirement

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Girls, teenagers, and young women diagnosed with *Turner Syndrome (TS)* often must deal with academic challenges such as pressure to work within a limited timeframe. Often educators must cover specific subject areas, and the curriculum is presented without sufficient time for application, discussion and practice. Parents and teachers working with girls and women with *TS* have expressed exasperation over the numerous policies and procedures endorsed by government policy makers, unsupported by research and education professionals. Today, it is common for schools to provide curriculum that “*touches upon*” academic concepts. This trend leaves a trail of students behind “*in the dust*,” including girls and women with *TS*. Though this “old school” thinking is not aligned to current research findings --- research that identifies the importance of using neuroscience evidence in educational settings needs to become “mainstream” and part of the educational culture. Until that time, children and adults with *TS* need to learn and experience academic success, and need a plan to be “on target” with research.

One academic area requiring continual focus and support beyond the current rudimentary development is the ability to communicate effectively through writing. Writing is a process, taking years to develop (Feifer, S., 2013); and women with *TS*, identified with learning differences, benefit from additional time to develop writing skills. For the record, this writer is of the philosophy that learning differences are just that, different ways of learning – not a negative label. Everyone must recognize that people should use a variety of effective strategies for academic and life successes and that “one size does ***not*** fit all!”

One way to develop stronger and more creative writing is to spend more, more, more time writing. More time does not equal hours, but ten minutes “here,” 20 minutes “there!” The trick is to make the writing enjoyable and fun. Parents of children with *TS*, and adults with *TS* should continue to approach writing in a positive way, while ensuring instruction incorporates specific strategies, based on individual needs. For the purposes of this discussion, there are two types of writing: personal and formal writing. When it comes to personal writing, it is important to write, write, write, and not become “caught up” in the rules and grammar. Why? Thoughts and ideas need to flow, and the fastest way to block the “*flow of thinking*” is to continually stop to check grammar and spelling. After writing down ideas, the writer should then go back and determine where to proceed. Ask basic questions:

- ❖ *What is the point of my writing?*
- ❖ *How did I feel while writing my thoughts?*
- ❖ *Did I share details that communicated my feelings, emotions?*
- ❖ *Did I incorporate my senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch?*
- ❖ *Did I communicate my point(s)?*

Over time, the task can become easier because the writer has not been bogged down with rules. One final consideration to increase writing is to determine whether there is negatively self-talk in the writer's mind when writing. If there is, the writer should stop and catch herself! When one negatively self-talks, it prevents so much from being written! If you have a difficult time writing the beginning of the piece, skip the beginning and go to the middle or the end of a story, and work backwards. Just do whatever it takes, even looking back at past writing and see changes that have been made – maybe the writing is longer in length, maybe there are more details, or more sensory words included.

If you would like more suggestions, then continue to read below for strategies for personal and formal writings:

Personal writing:

- Keep a personal journal
- Use models to visualize the specific type of writing (i.e., letter, poetry, lyrical writing)
- Have fun and write lyrics to a song that might express your emotions, thoughts or ideas
- Have confidence in your abilities – remember all individuals start with the first word!
- Do not allow “negative self-talk” to impact your personal writing
 - Personal writing reflects your personal style and it should be as unique as you!
- Use journal prompts or story starters to provide topics (see suggestions)
- Do not let others critique your work if you do not want it critiqued; personal means personal!

Formal writing:

- Use a checklist for support (see example)
- Use a writing model as a guide (i.e., report writing; school “papers;” essays, paragraphs...)
- Know that writing is not one-step, but multiple steps, requiring numerous drafts based off the original
- Use the writing process: *Brainstorming; Writing a draft; Revising; Editing; Final Copy*
- Editing all work before submission is a MUST! (This needs to be emphasized!)
 - Self-edit
 - Ask a person with a writing style similar to your writing style to provide both positive ***and*** constructive comments
 - Use grammar and spell check – *Microsoft®* has a spell check and grammar check available on its toolbar

In the end, the more one writes, the stronger and more elaborate the writing! So go out and buy a journal; or grab a binder laying around your home, and fill it with paper. If you are creative, make the binder/journal cover fun and creative to match your personality! Just start writing!

Reference

Feifer, S. G. (2013). *The Neuropsychology of Written Language Disorders: A Framework for Effective Interventions*. Middletown, MD: School Neuropsych Press.

Writer's Checklist

- ___ Each sentence begins with a capital letter
- ___ Each sentence ends with a punctuation mark
- ___ Names of people, places, things have been capitalized
- ___ All words are spelled correctly
- ___ Subject and verb are "in agreement" (She **is** –singular/ We **are** – plural)
- ___ Sentences are complete (*no run-on, or fragment sentences*)
- ___ Sentences have been read out loud and each makes sense
- ___ Each paragraph includes a topic sentence
- ___ Details have been included
- ___ Details matched, or are aligned, to the topic sentence
- ___ Order of the topic discussed is in a sequence, and not random
- ___ Another person has read my work and signed at the bottom.

Signature

Date

Editor Name: _____

Comments:

Strengths viewed in writing:

Continue to develop:

Journal Prompts

One day, while sitting next to...

Getting ready for a test can make me.....

My sister and I were playing outside by...

If only my teacher knew that I was thinking ...

Have you ever observed, from the corner of your eye...

At this point in my life, if I had three wishes, they would (explain each)...

I am tired of going to doctor appointments because...

My most favorite meal at the *diner* is...

Greatly disappointed by the weather coming "*down the pike*," my father...

My favorite hobby is....

Turner Syndrome is...

Do you believe schools should allow...

The differences between a good friend and a close friend are...

Three positive qualities about me...

School events can make me...

A family vacation *never to/ or to be* forgotten...

My mother/father or guardian told me...

Jumping onto the trampoline at...

My neighbors are going to...

My oldest memory of a family activity was...

Good times and bad times happen when...

The last snowstorm caused...

Summertime is the...

Graduating from high school and...

Want different journal prompts? Just "google!"