IOWA | Iowa Reading Research Center

Summer Writing Prompts

Grades 3–5

As soon as the bell rings on the last day of the academic year, most students turn their attention toward all the fun things they are going to do during their summer break. This enthusiasm for summer can actually be used as a source of motivation for writing that will keep their literacy skills sharp!

Practicing responding to creative writing prompts at home can help students strengthen skills such as crafting a narrative, establishing a clear sequence of events, developing an argument, and more. Creative writing can also help young students develop stronger reading skills, especially when they are encouraged to read their written responses aloud.

This guide includes summer-themed creative fiction and nonfiction writing prompts for children in Grades 3-5. While originally intended for use in the home during summer, these prompts would also be appropriate for classroom use. The prompts were written to encourage responders to draw from various literacy skills included in the **Common Core ELA Writing Standards.**

Reflection and Feedback—Suggestions for Caregivers and Educators

When administering these prompts, provide children with ample time to respond thoroughly and carefully. After writing, there are a few different feedback methods that may be helpful.

Independent Reflection

- Encourage writers to go back over what they have written to check for spelling, grammar, or logical errors.
- Encourage writers to read their written responses aloud. Some may have an easier time hearing mistakes than seeing them on the page.

Peer Feedback

- If multiple children are participating in this activity, encourage them to read one another's responses. Then, have them share what they liked about the other writers' responses, and any questions they have about them.

Caregiver/Educator Feedback

- Read over the responses. Check for the following elements:
  - Do their responses effectively address the question of the prompt?

  - Did they structure their narratives with a clear progression of events and/or ideas?
  - Did they successfully implement narrative techniques such as dialogue, descriptive language, and sensory details?
  - Do they back up any argumentative claims with logical supporting details?
  - Do their responses include clear and effective conclusions?
  - Did they demonstrate repeated or consistent mechanical errors, such as issues with spelling, sentence structure, or punctuation? If so, provide corrective feedback.
- Pick one or two areas of feedback to highlight for your writers and take time to discuss them together. You may be able to find additional resources on the web to provide practice opportunities in particular areas where improvement is needed. Be sure to also point out a few things that they are doing well in their writing.

Lastly, celebrate the writing process! Encourage writers to share their responses with friends, family members, and other loved ones. Perhaps they could send a handwritten copy of their response to a grandparent or call up a cousin and read what they wrote over the phone. And if a writer seems passionate about a specific prompt or topic, encourage them to keep writing about it, either via more guided practice or as something to do in their free time!

Additional Resources

- For more information on writing prompts, read our Understanding and Responding to Writing Prompts Guide.

Grades 3-5 Writing Prompts

The writing prompts that are listed below are also included on the pages that follow on lined sheets you can print and hand out to children to write their responses.

Fiction

During the summer, most kids get a break from school. But what do the teachers do? Write a story about a made-up teacher and what they do during summer vacation. Be sure to use creative details and to organize your thoughts in order.

Summer can be a great time to visit the beach! Write a story that tells about a character's trip to a lake or ocean. Use descriptive language and information from all five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch) to explain the character's experiences.

Imagine that you are a mosquito flying around in the summer. Using descriptive language, describe what the world would look like from this perspective. What kinds of things would you see? What would you do?

Some people like to go fishing during the summer. Write a story that tells about the best fishing trip ever. Be sure to include at least two characters, a few lines of dialogue, and lots of descriptive details.

Have you ever flown in a plane? Write a story that tells about someone flying on a plane for the first time to get to a summer vacation spot. What do they see? How do they feel? Be sure to use lots of details.

Nonfiction

Imagine you are trying to convince your family to buy you an ice cream treat on a hot summer day. What would you say to them? Be sure to use clear reasoning to support your argument.

Do you play any sports during the summer? Which sports do you play, and why do you like them? If you don't play any sports, describe a sport you would like to try, or another summer activity that you enjoy.

Summer is my favorite season. Is summer your favorite season? Why or why not? Be sure to use lots of supporting details to back up your argument.

Tell a story about your favorite memory from last summer. Who were you with? What did you do? Be sure to use descriptive language and lots of details.

Summer can be a good time to try new things. Write about a time when you tried something new. What happened? How did it turn out? Be sure to use descriptive language and lots of details.

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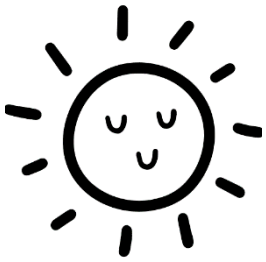

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