

Introducing a Writer's Notebook

Lesson Series 3

Notebook Sections

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Essential Sections

— Topics & Ideas Section (Pre-Writing):

Have students put their Expert Lists, ME Charts, ABC Charts, Heart Maps, and other idea lists in this section/pocket. This can also be where future pre-writings are stored.

— My Writing (First Drafts):

When students experiment with a writing skill or start new pieces, they can store them within this section/pocket of their notebooks.

— Helpful Hints Section:

Editing checklists, frequently misspelled word lists, writing rubrics, grammar rules, editing symbols lists, mini-lesson notes, reference lists, and more can be stored in this section/pocket of the writer's notebook.

Additional Sections

— Works Under Construction (Revision)

When a piece goes through the writing process (revision, editing, etc.), often there are a lot of loose papers, scraps, sticky notes, drafts, etc. To keep track of everything, it might be helpful to put all of the draft contents into this single section/pocket.

— Abandoned Writings

When the “My Writing” section starts overflowing, consider sorting the contents. Instead of having students throw away first drafts they no longer want to work on, have them separate these “abandoned writings” into a new section/pocket. These pieces offer a great place for future practice of specific grammatical skills within the context of the student’s own writing.

— WOW Words

If you provide students with word lists throughout the year, then this separate section makes for a quick-reference guide for students. Here’s where all those sensory word lists would go, plus synonyms lists, transition word lists, action verb lists, etc.

— Trait Tabs

Some teachers prefer to have a tab per trait for students to store all resource pages and handouts associated with their trait-based mini-lessons.

— Writing About Reading

If you are looking to build more of a literacy notebook, this can be the same place where students take notes on their reading, draft summaries, collect “Wow Words” from their independent reading, write literature responses, and more. A second use for this section can be to store content-area writing assignments (i.e. writing in science, social studies, health, etc.).

— Portable Notebook

Although the students’ writers’ notebooks do not leave the classroom, some writers are hit with inspiration when they least expect it— on the bus, at recess, at lunch, walking to class, etc. Writers need a place to jot down these great snippets. Consequently, a portable notebook is perfect for a backpack, pocket, or a purse. Students can utilize a mini-notebook to take to recess, to home, to the library, on field trips, etc. Some students sketch ideas; others record simple observations and conversations. These notebooks can be supplied by the teacher or added to the student supply list. NOTE: Not all students find value in the portable notebook. Don’t force all students to utilize one. When not in use, a student can store the mini notebook within a pocket of his binder or folder.