

Stamping and Writing Station

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Stamping Trays



Usually, the writing efforts of very young children are confined to watching the teacher record words for them as they dictate the text of an experience story. The children must rely on the teacher to do their writing for them because the teacher is the only one who knows how to write. The sound-stamps for the forty-four sounds offer children a unique opportunity to begin writing for themselves at the earliest levels of the program.

The freedom to write that the stamps make possible for children means that children may treat reading and writing as interchangeable processes. A child who sees  and can say "ear" is a beginning reader. A child who hears "ear" said by the teacher, or someone else, and can stamp out  is a beginning writer. A child who can think "ear" and translate this mind's thought into  has mastered the basic understanding necessary to both read and write.

The goal of the stamping activities that follow is to allow children the freedom to stamp words and phrases of their own creation. This goal is achieved with some necessary training along the way. The beginning must come through such rudimentary basics as how to use a rubber stamp and how to put a stamp, once used, correctly back in the tray.

The stamping trays and their associated activities are introduced once the Picture Packet, Worksheet, and Book Stations are operating smoothly. When the teacher decides it is time for the students to learn about the stamps, he or she positions himself or herself at the preliminary station heretofore used for coloring with crayons. The goal of the first day's lesson is simply to teach

the children how to take the stamps out and then put them away correctly. The procedure used to teach each group about the trays is as follows:

The teacher takes one stamp tray and fills it with the first eight sounds.



As the group members watch, the teacher takes each stamp out, one at a time, says the sound for that stamp, and then places it back in its correct slot. The teacher verbalizes each step as he or she performs it.

Teacher: "I am taking out the  sound. Say the sound with me."

All: " rrrrrrrrrrrr "

Teacher: "Now, I'm going to put this stamp back in its space. Do you see how I know where it goes?"

Look in the stamp tray and see the picture of the  in its space....

Now I'm taking out the sound... ."

Teachers often refer to the spaces for the stamps as their houses, and each stamp is said to have its own picture on the wall of its house.

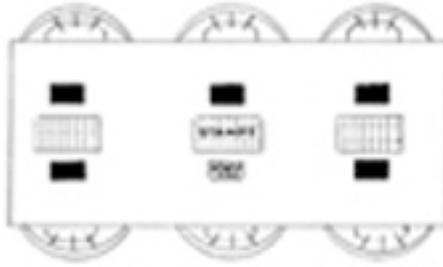
After the teacher has taken out the stamps one at a time and placed them back in their correct spaces, the children take turns removing a stamp, saying its name, and then placing the stamp back in the tray. Since this is done by one child at a time, it is easy for each child to return the selected stamp to its home.

When the children understand that each stamp is meant to be placed in a particular space in the tray, the teacher gently dumps the contents of the tray onto the table, and each student selects one stamp to return to its rightful home. Since there are eight stamps and not usually eight members in any learning group, the teacher asks for the assistance of the group in returning the remaining stamps to their homes.

This dumping out of the stamps and placing them back in the tray is repeated until the children have become experts at putting the stamps back in the tray. When they've learned their first day's lesson, they return to coloring with crayons. They do not begin actual stamping until the second day.

On the second day, when the stamp pads are introduced, it is advisable to cover the learning station table with butcher paper. This protects the table's surface from the stamps and prevents the need to scrub the tabletop later.

A suggested table setup is as follows:



Only stamp trays containing the first eight sounds are set out at the station. Blank paper is also provided for stamping practice.

For this day's activities, the children learn how to stamp. The correct technique is called "touch-touch". The children are to touch the rubber stamp to the stamp pad and then touch the rubber stamp to their paper. The touch-touch technique is taught to counteract the children's urge to pound the stamp into the stamp pad a few times and then pound it onto their paper.

The teacher models the touch-touch technique, saying the sound as the stamp is applied to the paper. Once the children have observed the teacher, they take turns selecting a stamp, touching it to the pad, and then touching it to their paper as they say its sound. When the children have mastered this process, they may begin selecting stamps at random and stamping out whatever they please. The teacher remains at the station to make sure everyone remembers the procedures for selecting stamps, stamping them, and then returning the stamps to their correct homes in the tray.

When the additional step of stamping with the stamp pad is added to what the children have learned at this station, some children will be so fascinated with the act of stamping that they forget about the putting-away process. It's natural for them to forget, but it's also natural for the teacher to be at the station with them, so this forgetting isn't allowed to become a habit.

On the third day, the children are allowed to use the stamps to stamp whatever they wish. The teacher only occasionally checks the station to see that the previous two days' lessons are being carried out. After a day or two of free stamping, the children are ready for more directed activities.

Two-Sound Stamping Worksheets

When the teacher decides that the students understand how to use the stamps and are ready for more directed stamping activities, the teacher once again positions himself or herself at the Stamping Station and introduces the Two-Sound Stamping Worksheets.



Teacher: "Let's read this first word together. Where do I start?"

Children: "At the arrow."

Teacher: "Okay. Say the sounds along with me."

All: " eeeeeeeeeee rrrrrrrrrrr " "

Teacher: "Again."

All: " eeeeeeeeeee rrrrrrrrrrr " "

Teacher: "Say it fast."

All: "Ear."

Teacher: "Which of these four pictures do you think is the one for ear?"

Children: "The horse."

Teacher: "Okay. I am going to stamp out the sounds for ear next to this picture. What stamp should I use first?"

Children: " eeeeeeeeeee " "

Teacher: "Which stamp is that?"

Children: "The little boy and the mouse."

Teacher: "Okay."

The teacher takes the  stamp from the stamp tray, touches it to the stamp pad and then touches it to the worksheet while saying, " eeeeeeeeeee " .

Teacher: "What do I do with this stamp now?"

Children: "Put it back in the tray."

Teacher: "Where in the tray?"

Children: "In its home!"

Teacher: "Okay. Which sound stamp do I use next."

Children: " rrrrrrrrrrr " "

Teacher: "Okay."

The teacher takes the  stamp from the stamp tray, touches it to the stamp pad and then touches it to the worksheet while saying, " rrrrrrrrrrr " .

Teacher: "Let's read the word I stamped out."

All: " eeeeeeeeeee rrrrrrrrrrrr "

Teacher: "Again."

All: " eeeeeeeeeee rrrrrrrrrrrr "

Teacher: "Say it fast."

All: "Ear."

Teacher: "Okay, what do I do with the stamp now?"

Children: "Put it back in its house."

Teacher: (Pointing to the first word on the worksheet) "Okay. Is the word I stamped the same as the word we read up here?"

Children: "Yes."

Teacher: "Okay. Lets read the next word on the worksheet."

The teacher and the members of the group repeat the above procedure for the next word. For the third and fourth words, the teacher selects children from the group to pick out the stamps to be touched to the pad, then touched to the worksheet while saying the sound, then returned to the stamp tray.

At the end of the fourth word, the teacher demonstrates how to wipe the worksheet clean, return it, and make another selection. The wiping-clean is the same process the students are already using at the Worksheet Station.

The next two worksheets are used to give everyone else in the group the opportunity to practice selecting stamps for stamping on the worksheet. When each student has had a turn, the group begins work on its own.

As the faster learners move from the triangle level to the circle level and so on, new rows are added to the stamp trays. For each new row added, the teacher provides a quick review lesson for selecting stamps and returning them to their correct homes. This review can be accomplished by gently dumping out all of the stamps, dividing them among the students, and having the students take turns returning their stamps to the correct spots in the tray. Taking turns is very important because it keeps the activity from becoming a race to see who can put his or her stamps back into the tray the fastest. Stamps should be placed in the tray with care.

It is important for children to learn to place each stamp back in its correct slot. If the stamps cannot be found in any particular order, then the process of trying to stamp out a word becomes a tedious one. If the children learn always to return stamps to their homes, then the search for the right stamp to use never becomes a chore. In addition, stamps that have homes are less apt to accidentally end up in the pocket of a child, because it is so obvious when a stamp isn't home.

There are not many stamping worksheets. The worksheets are only to teach students how to stamp out words. The Stamping Station is also the Creative Writing Station. As soon as children possess even the minimum level of skill, they begin their earliest creative writing by writing words. When the first students reach the star level of the two-sound activities, a new dimension is added to what is possible at the Stamping Station. This new element is called "free stamping".

Free Stamping of Words

The initial requirements for being allowed to free stamp are that the child knows all forty-four sounds, and the child is able to read at least some two-sound words. These requirements are only placed on the first students in a group to be allowed to free stamp. Once the first few students have learned the routine, other students are allowed to free stamp even if they do not know all forty-four sounds and even if they can't read two-sound words.

The assignment for free stampers is to think of a word for which they would like to draw a picture. Whatever word the child thinks of, he or she then stamps out at the bottom of a piece of drawing paper. Once the word is stamped out, the child draws an illustration to accompany the word. When one word is stamped and illustrated, another paper is used to repeat the cycle of thinking of a word, stamping it out, and illustrating it.

This activity provides children with excellent practice in trying to hear the sounds in words. For a child to be able to stamp out the word, he or she must say the word and then try to hear the sounds within that word.

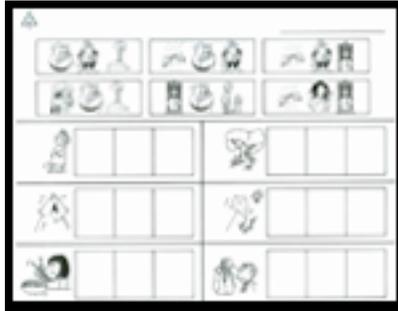
The first time the faster learners attempt to stamp out their own words, the teacher will have to spend a few minutes at their group assisting them. They may not be able to think of a word about which they want to draw, and once they do come up with a word, they may not have any idea how to listen for the sounds it uses.

Even though the children who begin this activity are only at the two-sound level, no limit is placed on the length of the words that they may attempt to stamp out. Any word they wish to try (subject to the limits of good taste) is perfectly acceptable. The children's stamping of words may leave out sounds that should be in and add in sounds that don't belong, but this is not important. What matters now is only the practice in listening to words, any words, and hearing the sounds within them.

The objective is to have all the students within each of the learning groups attempting, even if not always successfully, to stamp out their own words. This activity is limited to the faster learners at the start because it makes its introduction easier for the teacher. Once the faster learners can handle hearing most of the sounds in the words they wish to stamp out, students who do not know all of the sounds, or who are not very good at blending two-sound words, are allowed to try stamping out words as well.

We don't know exactly how children learn. We do know how to set up environments that have learning as their outcome. The structured, patterned activities of the Picture Packets and worksheets are one such environment. The unstructured learning of the free stamping activities are another. Both are important and, therefore, both are included for all students, regardless of our judgment of their abilities.

Three-Sound Stamping Worksheets



As the three-sound activities are added to the materials available at the other learning stations, the Three-Sound Stamping Worksheets are added to this station. No special instructions are provided for these worksheets. The words the students have been attempting as part of their free stamping will already have carried them well past the three-sound level. These particular worksheets are meant only to provide continuity to the activities the students are experiencing at each of the other learning stations.

Free Stamping of Words - Multiple Word Option

When students are introduced to the Three-Sound Stamping Worksheets, it means they have begun the three-sound level at all of their other reading stations as well. The free stamping activity is then modified slightly. These students may, if they wish, stamp out two or three words on their page before adding the illustration. Hopefully, these words will relate to one another and form a short descriptive phrase, but this is not a requirement. The students may stamp any words they wish.

Children who choose to stamp out more than one word on the bottom of their drawing paper are also taught to draw a rectangle around each of their words so that it is possible to tell one word from another. The child doing the stamping may know when one word ends and another begins, but anyone doing the reading may need a little help. The rectangles provide this help.

The option to stamp out more than one word before drawing a picture is formally extended only to children who have reached the three-sound level. Once this option is extended, however, any students who wish to attempt stamping out more than one word are not told they can't. The nature of stamping won't let students who are not truly ready to stamp out phrases know that they've failed. The nature of learning may let them succeed.

White and Blue Tiny Writing Cards - Phrases

The Tiny Writing Cards are introduced at the Stamping Station at the same time as other phrase-level activities are begun at the Picture Packet and Worksheet Stations. There are sixty-four White Cards and sixty-four Blue Cards. Within each set of cards, there is no level of difficulty. The first White Card is no more or less difficult than the sixty-fourth White Card. The White

Cards are introduced first because their words contain no more than three sounds. Many of the phrases on the Blue Cards contain four-sound words.



Even though the children at the Stamping Station can stamp out anything they feel like attempting, regardless of their reading level, only the children who have reached the phrase level at the other stations are given the Tiny Writing Cards to use. Children who cannot read two or three-sound words with any degree of confidence can still attempt to stamp out the sounds they hear in words. Even if a child cannot stamp out a word that anyone else could read, at least that child himself or herself knows what word the stamps are supposed to represent. The Tiny Writing Cards require a more precise level of knowledge from the child and are, therefore, reserved for use by only those children who have demonstrated they have the necessary knowledge.

To use the Tiny Writing Cards a child selects a Card, copies it with stamps onto his or her drawing paper, and then illustrates the phrase thus copied. Children may write the number of the Card on their drawing paper so they will know which Cards they have already used.

As students create pages with stamped words and drawings on them, they are also creating excellent reading materials to be carried home and shared with parents, brothers, and sisters. A convenient way to send these pages home is in book form. The teacher has the children who are working on the Cards collect ten or so pages to be stapled together. The teacher can tell by looking at the illustrations which phrases the child managed to decode correctly. Only correctly read phrases are included in the home-bound book.

The Tiny Writing Card books make good materials to send home for two reasons. First, the teacher only sends home the pages that contain words that the children have already demonstrated they can read correctly, either because the illustration indicates this comprehension or because the teacher asked the child to read the words to him or to her. Sending home pages that the child can read and that the child himself or herself has personally illustrated is good public relations, since the parents will be impressed with how much their son or daughter has learned at school.

Second, since the words have been copied directly from the Tiny Writing

Cards, they are all correctly stamped. Children could equally well have carried home their work from their free stamping activities, because they can all read what they stamped, but often these free stamped words are not in a form that someone other than the child could easily recognize. The words stamped from the Tiny Writing Cards are readable by parents who are trying to follow along with the school learning of their children. The words the children make up to stamp usually aren't quite so readable. The drawings that are the byproduct of the Tiny Writing Cards go home with the children. The drawings that are the by-product of free stamping do not.

Free Stamping of Phrases

Before selected students were introduced to the Tiny Writing Cards, all of the students at the Stamping Station were already allowed to stamp out words or clusters of words and illustrate their stampings. None of this free stamping changes with the introduction of the Tiny Writing Cards, but the quality of the stamping can be expected to improve.

The Tiny Writing Cards acquaint their users with a greater variety of words than do the Stamping Worksheets. In addition, the Tiny Writing Cards often add prepositions to words to form short phrases. Students soon begin free stamping “a house” or “the ball” instead of just “house” or “ball”. This becomes true for both the children who are using the writing cards and the children for whom these faster learners provide both modeling and assistance.

White and Blue Tiny Writing Cards - Transition Level

The transition level of the Tiny Writing Cards begins at the same time as the children who reach this level are beginning transition activities at all the other stations. The activity itself remains essentially the same. The same Tiny Writing Cards are still in use. The difference now is that the Decoding Charts are used to help students write the phrases on their drawing paper in traditional letters before the illustrations are added.

The teacher may present this writing using one of two methods. For the first method, the children stamp the sounds out on their drawing paper and then write the appropriate letters beneath the words thus stamped. For the second method, the children use the Tiny Writing Cards to help them write the traditional words on their drawing paper. No stamps are used at all.

Which of the two methods is used and by whom it is used is up to the teacher. The first wave of children to reach the transition level might do quite nicely when asked only to write letters on their drawing papers. Subsequent clusters of students might benefit, instead, from the presence of both stamps and letters on their pages. Stamps accompanying the letters serve as an instant dictionary for pronunciation when the written words are taken home to be read to parents.

Once the words are written on the drawing paper, they are illustrated as they were when the Tiny Writing Cards were used at the phrase level. The pages formed from the words and their illustration are formed into books for the students to carry home and share with their relatives. As was true for the

phrase books, only pages that the students can read are included.

The worksheets that the students use for transition-level activities at the Worksheet Station indicate the spelling that is to be written for a sound by a color coding. The Tiny Writing Cards use numbers and not colors to indicate spellings. The color codings make the Decoding Chart easier for children to learn. Once learned, however, numbers make it easier for the teacher to indicate the spellings to be used when children begin creative writing.

Creative Writing

The tools of creative writing:

- 1) Individual chalkboard, with chalk and eraser
(see Chalkboards in Appendix)
- 2) Spelling notebook
- 3) Writing paper
- 4) Drawing paper
- 5) Small stamps

The children who reach the creative writing level of the program have already demonstrated their ability to read and write. The reading and writing at which they have become experts, however, is not the reading or the writing that is common in the world outside the classroom.

Children begin creative writing activities at about the same time they begin the vowels-only activities at both the Picture Packet and Book Stations. There are no vowels-only activities at either the Worksheet Station or the Handwriting Station, because the time formerly devoted to completing work at these two stations is now to be devoted to creative writing. The Components Chart indicates that both the Worksheet and the Handwriting Stations "Fade to Creative Writing". This means that when children are ready to begin writing, they will have ample time at the learning stations to accomplish this writing.

The children who are ready to spend so much of their time writing are still to be working in their old learning groups. Even though the creative writers may be working on the same story for the whole length of the reading period, they pick up their chalkboards, writing papers, and whatever else they may be using and carry these tools with them as their group rotates from station to station.

In creative writing, the goal is to have students write whatever they want to write, just as earlier, they stamped whatever they wanted to stamp. Initially, however, it is often beneficial for the teacher to provide the students with topics about which they are to write.

There are two reasons why it is advisable for the teacher to suggest the initial topics to the first students who reach the creative writing level. The first is to expand the children's concept of how much they should write. The stamping emphasis was on words and short phrases. Now, the children are expected to write sentences and, eventually, paragraphs and full pages. Topics suggested by the teacher help the children break out of the word and short phrase mode of writing.

The second reason it is useful for suggestions of topics to come from the teacher is that the books can then be made from the creative writings that have a theme that can link all the writing together. "Monster Stories," for example, would be the book made from stories children wrote about monsters.

It is not difficult to think of topics to suggest to the creative writers. Monster stories is an example of a topic children enjoy writing and drawing about. Other kinds of topics might be: What happened last time on your favorite T-V show? What would you do if you were a police officer? What would you wish for if you had three (or more) wishes? What did you do last summer? Write a scary story. What would you do if you were the President? and so on. These topic suggestions are designed to encourage children to write more than a phrase. Once the children get used to writing, they won't need much encouragement at all.

After the creative writing students have produced a few books in response to teacher suggestions, the teacher asks the students themselves what they think they should write about. This request for suggestions needn't be confined to those students who are to be doing the writing. The whole class can be asked to provide ideas for the kinds of books they'd like to see their classmates produce for the Book Station.

When the teacher decides to have a select group of children begin creative writing, the chosen students are pulled temporarily from their learning groups and given a private lesson on what they need to know. Subsequent students may not need to be taken away from their regular groups to be shown what to do because those who have already begun will have already provided a model of creative writing.

The procedure for preparing the first group of creative writers is:

- 1) Selected students are gathered into a special group.
- 2) The children are told they are each to write a story and then draw a picture to go along with it. The topic for the story is suggested and discussed. They are also told that their writings and drawings are to be made into a book to be added to the Book Station.
- 3) The children are told to write words with the aid of their Decoding Charts. No stamps are to be used, only letters.
- 4) Spelling notebooks are issued, and their use is explained.
- 5) The chalkboards and chalk are issued, and the children practice writing and erasing on their boards by writing sight words from the teacher's dictation.
- 6) The children begin writing. They do not participate in the regular group rotation on this first day. Instead, they devote their entire reading period to writing and illustrating their stories.
- 7) As each child finishes his or her chalkboard story, the teacher checks it and adds needed words to the child's spelling notebook.
- 8) Corrected stories are copied by the child-author onto lined paper.
- 9) When the lined paper copying is done, the illustration is begun.
- 10) Once children complete their work (both writing and drawing), they are given the next topic about which to write.

Not all of the children will finish their writings and drawings at the same time. The teacher should already have in mind a sequence of topics to assign to the children. They won't all be working on the same topic at the same time, but they can all be working on the same sequence. When all of the children working on creative writing complete a topic, that topic's book can be made and added to the Book Station. The first students to complete the series of topics are the first students asked to write about whatever they wish.

The primary goal of the Baratta-Lorton Reading Program is to allow children to learn to read and to write. The specific objective of creative writing is to help children learn to use written words to capture their thoughts on paper. Recording sounds with letters is a difficult enough task without also having to remember the rules for sentences, periods, capitals, or whatever. Once children become fluent and comfortable with writing words, the teacher may gradually begin explaining what sentences are and why people write capital letters and periods, so they can tell one sentence from another. The rules of writing are necessary. But it is much easier to introduce these rules to a child who can already write and who enjoys the process than it is to require knowledge of such things from a child who is having enough trouble figuring out what letter to write next.

The goal of this program is to allow children to read and write comfortably and with enjoyment. Students who reach the vowels-only level of reading and the creative writing level of written expression have learned all this program has to teach them. All that is left for the teacher to do for children who achieve this level is let them use the skills they have learned.