

End of Grade 6

Understanding Provincial Achievement Standards in Reading and Writing

Helping your child to be successful



In earlier grades, your child developed many skills in reading and writing. Although he or she is becoming increasingly independent, you can continue to help him or her on the path to being an effective reader and writer.



You can be involved in building your child's writing skills.

Encouragement

- Encourage your child to pursue forms of writing that interest her or him. You might begin an online space to share family updates and events.
- Write with your child. If your child has an online space, request an invitation to contribute.
- Encourage your child to ask the questions on the attached bookmark.
- Point out the specific strengths of your child's writing. For example, "I love the colourful details you used in this part."

Focus

- We learn to write by writing, so help your child to set aside time to write.
- Ask your child what he or she is working on as a writer. Assure your child that writing benefits from attention and practice.
- Encourage your child to follow the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, publishing.

Awareness

- Help your child see that people write for many purposes (e.g., to-do lists, blogs, emails).
- Writers use good penmanship and punctuation to make it easy for the reader to understand their message.
- Writers who read develop stronger writing skills. Encourage any form of reading, such as comics, graphic novels or blogs.

Be a successful writer.

Reflect on your writing by asking these questions:

Did I

- ✓ select a specific topic and support my ideas with relevant details?
- ✓ choose a form that suits my purpose?
- ✓ include an introduction and a conclusion?
- ✓ put my ideas in order and organize them into paragraphs?
- ✓ use interesting and descriptive words that say what I mean?
- ✓ write with my audience in mind and show that I care about the topic?
- ✓ include different kinds and lengths of sentences with varied beginnings?
- ✓ spell words correctly and use correct grammar?
- ✓ use correct punctuation?

Recognize the signs of a successful writer.

Teachers look at six areas of a student's writing to identify success, as reflected in the Provincial Achievement Standards for the end of Grade 6. The *Troubled Waters* story on this page is an example of acceptable writing by a student at the **end of Grade 6**.

Content includes the ideas and details of the piece of writing. In the *Troubled Waters* example, the writer has focused on a specific topic (the surfing incident) and included details to support this main idea (Melissa nodded happily. . . and ...too far from shore to be heard).

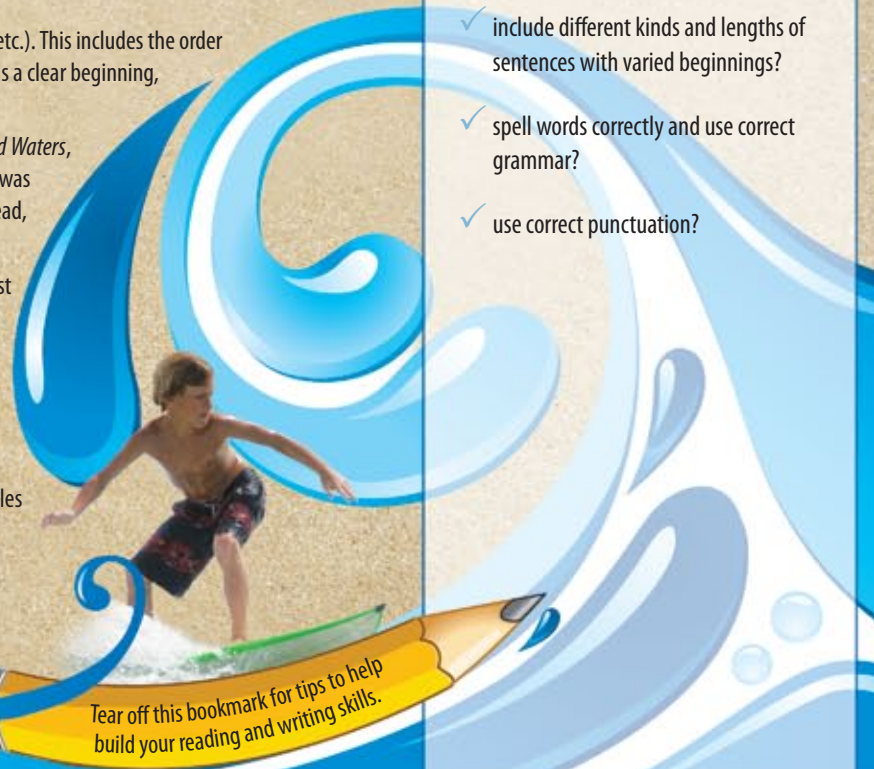
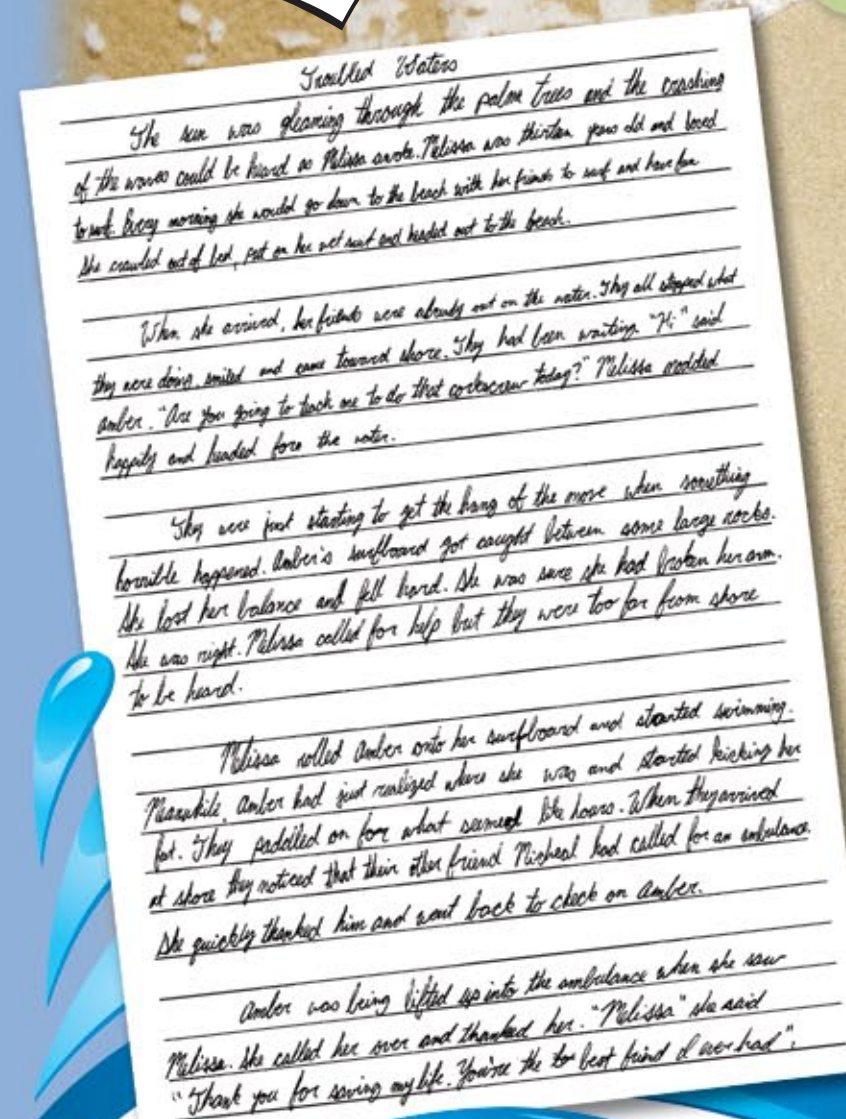
Organization involves the structure and form of the writing (letter, story, report, etc.). This includes the order and grouping of ideas. The story *Troubled Waters* is written in a logical order and has a clear beginning, middle and end. The paragraph divisions are appropriate and helpful to the reader.

Sentence Structure means the writer uses a variety of sentence types. In *Troubled Waters*, the writer used different kinds of sentences, including some complex ones (Amber was being lifted up into the ambulance when she saw Melissa). The writing is easy to read, as sentences have different lengths and beginnings.

Voice shows that the student cares about the topic and understands how to interest the reader. The writing gives glimpses of the writer's personality. (Are you going to teach me to do that corkscrew today?)

Conventions include spelling, punctuation and grammar. All of the common words in *Troubled Waters* are spelled correctly. Quotation marks, commas and other punctuation marks are used properly in most places.

Word Choice means that descriptive and interesting words are used. Some examples from *Troubled Waters* are: gleaming, noticed and crashing of the waves.



Tear off this bookmark for tips to help build your reading and writing skills.

Be a successful reader.

Using **reading strategies** helps you become a better reader. Develop a habit of asking these kinds of questions as part of your reading routine.

Before reading:

- What do I know about this kind of text (poem, recipe, news article) that will help me?
- What do I think this will be about?
- What do I already know about this topic?

During reading:

- Were my predictions correct?
- What do I visualize as I am reading?
- Are there challenging parts where I need to slow down or reread?
- Can I use context clues or other strategies to figure out difficult words?

After reading:

- Can I summarize what I have read?
- What is the main idea (theme) of what I read?
- Is this author trying to persuade me of something?
- How does this text compare to other things I have read or seen?
- What did the author do to make this an effective piece of writing (first-rate word choice, strong voice, interesting use of font, etc.)?

What is text?

Text includes print (e.g., poetry, fiction, non-fiction), media and visuals (e.g., journalism, film, television and advertising).

Recognize the signs of a successful reader.

In Grade 6, your child will read a variety of literature and non-fiction that covers a range of topics beyond his or her personal experiences. Some of these will have more mature ideas that deal with human problems, such as war, hardship or racism.

You and your child's teacher can tell whether your child is reading successfully by watching for growth in the following **reading behaviours**, taken from the Provincial Achievement Standards for the **end of Grade 6**.

Knowing when meaning is lost and using reading strategies to self-correct
Encourage your child to understand difficult passages by rereading, reading on, skimming, scanning or making connections.

Improving in the use of strategies to solve unknown words independently
Encourage your child to use clues, such as word order and word parts (prefixes, suffixes and root words), to solve longer words in all subjects.

Automatically recognizing a wide variety of words, including those in different school subjects
Encourage your child to read and remember important words in subjects such as math (e.g., fraction, denominator, parallelogram) and science (e.g., thermometer, generator, habitat).

Reading familiar passages fluently and with expression
Encourage your child to read and reread passages until the audience can easily understand because the reading is smooth, correctly paced and expressive.

Making and adjusting predictions while reading
Encourage your child to draw on the clues in the text, her or his personal knowledge, and features of the text (e.g., rhyming words in a poem, lists of ingredients in a recipe) to make predictions while reading; and then, check how correct they were.

Using text features (table of contents, glossary, subheadings, index, sidebars, charts, font) to interpret and locate information
Encourage your child to use all of the information in a text—not just the words in the paragraphs—to understand content and word meaning.

By the **end of Grade 6**, your child should be able to read and understand texts similar to the one on the right. Texts can cover a range of topics that often go beyond personal experience. Pop culture and growing independence are examples of topics that appeal to pre-adolescents. While you should continue to be aware of what your child is choosing to read, your maturing child may enjoy books that challenge your idea of what is suitable.

The language in reading material is more challenging, with more advanced vocabulary, longer and more complex sentences and more figurative language (similes, metaphors).

In fiction, there are many lines of print on a page and few or no illustrations. Plots are more complex (subplots, multiple story lines, unexpected twists). Main characters may be more unpredictable, with shades of good and bad.

Information texts, such as Toxic Territory, often contain equal amounts of print and illustrations. Additional information is contained in such features as subheadings and captions. Sections of the text (air pollution, water pollution) break down larger topics (environmental toxins).

Toxic Territory

Article by Sophi Nauman

In your home, at your school, on the street – just about anywhere you care to go – there are invisible poisons all around you.

Environmental toxins come from everyday things such as vehicle exhaust, factory smoke, and fumes from incinerators. Even household cleaning products and garden fertilizers can contain these toxins. Although environmental toxins may be hard to see, you can find their effects everywhere you look.

There are facts to show that environmental toxins – such as pesticides in crops and chemicals in smog – can cause serious health problems. They may set off allergies and make medical conditions such as asthma a lot worse.

Beware of the Air!

If you look around, you can see the effects of air pollution. In some cities, air pollution from traffic and factories can make you feel as though you're looking through a dirty window.

Buses, cars, and trucks pump carbon monoxide into the air through their exhaust systems. Factories and power plants foul up the air with dirt, dust, soot, and smoke. When we burn oil and gas for home heating, it does the same thing.

Governments around the world have made laws to cut down on pollutants. New rules say that many factories have to use technology that catches pollution before it reaches the environment.



Lead in gasoline used to be a major air pollutant. But since 1996, leaded gasoline has been banned for on-road vehicles in the United States. New cars now run on unleaded fuels.

Water, Water, Everywhere...

Water is one of life's essentials. When water is affected by pollutants, every living thing loses. Every day in the United States, each person uses roughly 150 gallons of water. Depending on where you live, water supplies might seem endless. But, in fact, our supplies of fresh water are shrinking.

Most of the water we use comes from lakes and rivers or it is taken from the ground. Pollutants can leak into these sources of fresh water. Some pollutants make their way into the water from chemical or sewage spills into rivers and lakes. Others, like weedkillers, get into the water when soil washes off farms and gardens.

In many countries, water is treated with chemicals such as chlorine before it is pumped to homes. These chemicals get rid of environmental toxins and other substances that might make people sick.



According to the World Health Organization, about one-sixth of the world's people have no clean water to drink.

You can be involved in building your child's reading skills.

Although your child is more independent now, you can still play an active part in his or her progress. One way is to help your child to set aside enough time to read. Encourage him or her to read independently (e.g. newspapers, magazines, comic books). If your child discovers a topic, a series or an author that he or she loves, support this interest. You might even take the time to read some of the same books. Above all, talk with your child about what she or he is reading.

Here are some examples of questions to get the conversation started:

- What do you think this book (poem, news story) is going to be about?
- What is happening in the story so far? What are you learning in this article?
- Which character is most like you? Why do you think so?
- Do you think others should read or view this text? Why or why not?
- Do you think that the author knows a lot about this subject?
- Do you think the author understands all sides of this problem?

Contact Us

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is committed to your child's reading and writing success. If you have any questions about your child's progress or about how you can be an active part of his or her learning, contact your child's teacher or the provincial literacy team at 506-453-2812.