Keeping a notebook is the single best way I know to survive as a writer. It encourages you to pay attention to your world, inside and out. It serves as a container to keep together all the seeds you gather until you’re ready to plant them. It gives you a quiet place to catch your breath and begin to write.

—Ralph Fletcher, *Breathing In, Breathing Out: Keeping a Writer’s Notebook* (1996, 1)

Your notebook is a room of your own. It provides a safe place for you to ask:

- What do I notice?
- What do I care about?
- What really matters?
- What moves the deepest part of me?
- What haunts me?
- What do I want to remember—in my life, in this world—for the rest of my life?
- What do I want to write about?
- How might I begin?

—Ralph Fletcher, *Breathing In, Breathing Out: Keeping a Writer’s Notebook* (1996, 3)
Expectations

To read voraciously for pleasure,
    because there are so many great books
To write or draw everything you think or feel or believe,
    because your thinking matters

—Linda Rief
Keeping Your Writer’s-Reader’s Notebook

Maintain Your:
◆ Books I Am Currently Reading List
◆ Books I Want to Read List
◆ Ideas for Writing List

Response Section
◆ To collect writing ideas and initial drafts of writing.
◆ To collect/respond to/react to/reflect on reading (books, magazines, instructions, other classes, etc.), writing, observations, and discoveries about yourself, others, and the world with ______ pages of writing, collected pictures, charts, cartoons, lists, drawings per week.
◆ To read for ______ each night, ______ times per week.
◆ To record ______ entries per week. An entry looks like this:
  Date
  Title of Book (or Magazine and “Article”)
  Time spent reading, pages read
◆ To read with a writer’s eye—what are you noticing/learning about writing from the writers you read?
◆ To collect at least one poem per month, glued into your Writer’s-Reader’s Notebook (W-RN) with an explanation of why you chose this poem and how it reflects you and your thinking at the moment.

Notes Section
◆ To record all notes given in class.
◆ To maintain a Table of Contents for these lessons/instructions, so you can easily find and use the information.

Vocabulary Section
◆ To “find” at least ______ words per week that are new or unknown (from reading, listening, talking, in or out of school). These are words you’d like to begin to use in your speaking and writing.
◆ To write each word in the vocab section of this W-RN in the sentence in which you found the word and with the appropriate definition (based on the context of the sentence) written in your own words.
◆ To look for and record each new context in which you discover the same word again (this counts as a new word: same word in new context) with the appropriate definition.

Spelling Matters Section
◆ To maintain Spelling rules and Personal Spelling Lists (the last section in your W-RN).
◆ When given the correct spelling of words on your pre-final draft in language arts or any other class, to write those words under the rule that applies to their spelling, or through usage, or on your Personal Spelling List when they are the exception to all the rules.
Books I Am Currently Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>NO. OF PAGES</th>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>DATE BEGUN</th>
<th>DATE FINISHED</th>
<th>DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY</th>
<th>RATING 1 2 3 4 5</th>
<th>BEST ONE-WORD DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


Writing draws out of memory what can’t be recalled any other way. . . . As you notice more, what you notice increases. . . . Awareness makes writing possible . . . writing increases awareness.

—Donald Murray, Shoptalk (1990, 14–15)
Vocabulary

The difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning-bug.

—Mark Twain from Shoptalk (Donald Murray 1990, 162)

In her published journal, A Circle of Quiet, author Madeleine L’Engle says:

The more limited our language is, the more limited we are; the more limited the literature we give our children, the more limited their capacity to respond, and therefore, in their turn, to create. The more our vocabulary is controlled, the less we will be able to think for ourselves. We do think in words, and the fewer words we know, the more restricted our thoughts. As our vocabulary expands, so does our power to think. (1972, 149).

You are to find and write down ________ words per week to add to the vocabulary words I will give you. Write the sentence in which you find or hear the word, underline the word, and jot down the definition that best fits the word based on the sentence in which it appears. Choose words that intrigue you, words that you really want to know. Date each week.

(Remember, definitions are numbered in the dictionary beginning with most common use of a word, which may not be the best meaning for the way your word is used in the sentence.)

Extra Credit:

◆ Find and write down the etymology, or history, of the word (usually found at the end of the entry in the dictionary).

◆ Draw a sketch or picture that shows your understanding of the word.

◆ Write your own sentence using the word appropriately and giving it a context that lets us know you understand the use of the word.

Where do you find or hear the words? In your reading! In newspapers or magazines! From teachers, parents, peers! On TV! Everywhere!
There is little point in learning to spell if you have little intention of writing.
—Frank Smith

Spelling matters, especially in your final drafts. You want a reader to understand clearly what you are thinking and saying. Standard spelling helps us understand what a writer means.

However, there is no reason to continually worry about spelling correctly in your first drafts. Getting ideas on paper and crafting those ideas in the best order with the strongest, most compelling words matter the most. When you are satisfied with what you’ve said and how you’ve said it, you can carefully edit for the correct conventions of language, in order to give your reader clear directions on how to read it. This includes correct spelling.

One of the ways you might learn to strengthen your spelling is to organize the words that give you difficulty under the rules that guide their spelling. This will help you understand patterns of spelling with which you may be having trouble. Organizing the words this way will help you remember how these particular words are guided by specific rules. As you notice, figure out, and receive corrections to the spelling of words, add them to this list. Notice, however, that many words in English might not fit any of these categories; you should add those words to your Personal Spelling List.

Spelling Rule 1: Write *i* before *e*, except after *c*, or when sounded like *a*, as in *neighbor* and *weigh*.

Examples of *i* before *e*: friend, believe, view, achieve, belief, thief, grief, chief, yield

Examples of except after *c*: receive, receipt, conceited

Examples of *ei* sounding like long *a*: neighbor, weigh, reign, sleigh

Exceptions to the above rules: neither, either, weird, their, foreign, seize, leisure, height
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