

More Ideas to Motivate Reluctant Writers

By Linda Popolano In my previous article on motivating a student who dislikes writing, I talked about my experiences with my son and how we overcame his dislike of writing through his interest in writing product and book reviews at Amazon.com and dreaming up writing ideas that combined his love of drawing and sketching with writing assignments. Some other ideas we have used which were also fun and effective (the teacher learns what's effective after the fact, but fun was always the essential element in the beginning) included the following: In teaching basic writing, once the idea of parts of speech were taught and understood, we found two highly effective and enjoyable methods of mastering the knowledge of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc. and, from there, learning to write better sentences. The Mad-Libs pads of crazy stories with blanks to be filled in for various parts of speech are found in most bookstores. Our family had many evenings full of laughter with one of us asking for words that filled the criteria of being certain parts of speech and then reading back the silly stories which resulted from those suggested words. Boys of a certain age seem to really get a certain pleasure out of using gory adjectives and somewhat violent verbs, but you can set the rules in advance. Sometimes, so the stories wouldn't end up so outlandish, the reader who was asking for the parts of speech would narrow down the topics on which words could be offered so that the resulting stories actually made some kind of weird sense. For encouraging creativity, after you've bought your first Mad-Libs book, you can save the money and have you or your children write your own stories with blanks and ask for the appropriate parts of speech. The second method, once parts of speech are totally mastered, is to simply create a basic subject-verb sentence, such as "A dog ran" and then, step by step, have your child add an adjective, then an adverb, then a prepositional phrase, in order to learn how more complex sentences are built and how detail makes a sentence more interesting. This is a major step in becoming a better writer. It is also a lot more fun than diagramming sentences. If you do one of these "build more complex sentences" activities each day with a different subject and verb, your child will become a masterful sentence composer in very little time. Once your child is proficient in writing complex sentences, you will find that he or she still may not like to write a requested paragraph or essay on a specific assigned topic. Especially if the child is a visual learner, I have found it to be more effective to give him a picture...an old photograph, a scene from a wall calendar, a page from a magazine...and ask him to write either about what he sees or to make up a story about what is happening in the picture. As I wrote in my previous article, the main thing is to find out what appeals to your specific child and run with it until his comfort level with writing improves to the point that he is ready to write on an assigned topic not of his choice. But first, like me, you will probably have to endure a lot of stories about aliens, other planets, strange creatures, and bizarre situations. However, if your student kept the pen to the paper, enjoyed the process, and is proud of his final product, you are on the way to changing writing reluctance into writing pleasure.

About the Author

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