

Teaching Reading and Writing as a Classical Homeschooler

Kindergarten through second grade: Just a little bit every day (ish)

Read aloud as much as possible. Your child will only hear words read in order, without skipping words, in complex and beautiful sentences from you reading aloud. Think aloud as you read and discuss the characters, context and plot together.

Short, daily phonics lessons. 50% of children will never be proficient readers without explicit phonics. They will read fluently and proficiently if you continue to do short, daily phonics lessons. *All About Reading* (begin ages 5-6)

A handwriting curriculum. Do a little bit every day. Once they can form letters, you can use the memory work as copy work. (begin ages 5-6)

Spelling curriculum. Start only once reading is underway, after *All About Reading Level 1*, for example. *All About Spelling* (Use the letter tiles app) (begin ages 6-7)

Writing Curriculum that teaches narration and dictation. A little bit every day. *Writing With Ease Level 1* in first grade or start with *Level 2* in second grade. (begin ages 6-7)

Formal grammar, but not yet! There are numerous good grammar programs. These will reinforce language mechanics and good sentence structure. (4th/5th grade - *at the earliest!*)

The goal is to gently build your child's skills and also his endurance.

Developing Independence in Writing

Independence in writing takes time and is achieved at very different rates in different children. There are stages along the way, and the progress through them is glacial... you will often feel there is no progress at all.

These stages center around the processes of narration, copy work, and dictation before moving on to more complex issues of clarity and mechanics.

Stage one - Oral Narration: Your child verbally narrates back what you have read, and answers questions you ask to focus their thoughts. "What happened in this story? What is something you remember about the story? What happened in the beginning, middle and end of the story?" You can write your child's words down so that they see how the words they think and speak can become written words.

Stage 2 - Copy work: You have your child copy the words you have written down. First, this might be a couple of sentences. Gradually, you can increase the length as your child's endurance increases.

**It is not uncommon for a child to be in the copywork phase at the start of 4th grade when they start having assignments from CCC. Guide their narration so it is a length they can manage and have them copy it. They will have the pleasure of turning in their best work to a teacher!*

Stage 3 - Dictation: You transition from writing down their narration to dictating it back to them. You are still helping them organize their thoughts and then dictating the agreed upon sentence back, giving help with spelling as needed. Gradually this will begin to look more independent, with the child telling you what they will write next and you saying, "Good, write that down!" and helping them with spelling.

Stage 4 - Independent writing: Finally, your child will feel confident enough to write multiple sentences or paragraphs independently. This independent phase often coincides with readiness to type instead of hand-write essays.

Supporting Independent Writing for Colm Cille Club

Book list - Plan ahead so that your child has read the book about which they will be writing. If you are unable to read the book, ask your teacher for an alternative assignment or complete the assignment using another story.

Weekly planning - Most children require a plan that uses the whole week, dividing the writing into 15-20 minutes per day over the four days. For younger children this may be copying or dictating a few sentences each day. Later, this may mean completing a paragraph or two each day, with a final day for revisions.

Prewriting - The conversations you have before your child starts writing are the most important part of your writing instruction, even for independent writers. This is so the child does not have the frustration of writing a whole essay that entirely misses the point of the assignment! In 7th/8th grade during the *Lost Tools of Writing* year the pre-writing process is very detailed, and it is more important that you help with that stage than the proofreading stage.

Proofreading - Even after your child is writing independently, they will need help with language mechanics. Start by just modeling: point out the exact error and explain what it is and how to fix it. Later, ask them to find errors you see first. For example, tell them to go back through and capitalize all the proper nouns, or look for run-on sentences. *Do not worry* if your child submits writing you have not proofread - all kids' rough drafts are rough!

Types of Assignments from Colm Cille Club

Narration - summarizing the plot of a book or story. Use a classic book report format (Setting, characters, beginning, middle, end), plot map, or outline.

Expansion - describe characters, settings, works of art. Use language that appeals to the five senses, expand sentences using rich vocabulary and literary devices.

Analyze and persuade - notice, describe, confirm, and refute what is good or bad within a story. Discuss themes and motivations of characters. Compare and contrast. Find and reference examples and quotes from the text. Form theses and defend using examples and quotes from the text. *Lost Tools of Writing*.

Other forms: Letter writing, poetry, creative writing.

Here's a list of the curricula we've found useful across the grades. Each of these should be done "daily-ish" at home.

Kids will be at different levels at different grades- DO NOT move forward quickly so they can keep up with their assigned grade level. Taking your time and building a strong foundation is much more important than "whizzing through the levels" or finishing the book.

KINDERGARTEN *(30 minutes to 1 hour)*

Reading - Read aloud

Phonics - begin All About Reading

- don't rush through level 1 - consider supplementing with "Bob Books" to help build a strong foundation

Handwriting - Rhythm of Handwriting or Handwriting without Tears

FIRST GRADE *(30 minutes to 1 hour)*

Reading Read aloud

Phonics - continue All About Reading through all four levels

Spelling -All About Spelling -

Begin after completing All About Reading Lev 1

Writing -Writing with Ease Level 1 -

Begin after completing All About Reading Level 1

Handwriting - Rhythm of Handwriting or Handwriting without Tears

Supplement with Memory Work copywork

SECOND GRADE *(1 hour)*

Reading - Read aloud

Phonics - continue All About Reading through all four levels

Spelling - continue AAS through levels, or switch to Phonetic Zoo after Lev 3

Writing -Continue with Writing with Ease (Levels 1 or 2)

Handwriting - Rhythm of Handwriting or Handwriting without Tears

Supplement with Memory Work Copy work

THIRD GRADE (1 hour)

Reading- Read aloud

Phonics - Continue All About Reading until reading fluently

Spelling - continue AAS through levels, or switch to Phonetic Zoo after Lev 3

Writing - Writing and Rhetoric at CCC

BE SURE TO continue through the workbook at home OR continue with
Writing With Ease

Handwriting - memory work copywork, add cursive if you didn't start with it.

FOURTH GRADE

Reading- CCC reading - some independent, still mostly read aloud

Phonics - Continue All About Reading until reading fluently, independent reading of their choice.

Spelling - continue AAS through levels, or switch to Phonetic Zoo after Lev 3

Writing - CCC writing assignment with supervision over multiple days

(Narrative, expansive, descriptive writing)

Handwriting - memory work copywork, handwritten writing assignments

Grammar - Consider adding grammar, or wait another year -

Junior Analytical Grammar or Well Ordered Language

FIFTH GRADE

Reading- CCC reading - independent, family read aloud, audible

Spelling - AAS through levels, or switch to Phonetic Zoo after Level 3

Writing - CCC writing assignment with supervision over multiple days

(Narrative, expansive, descriptive writing, Confirmation, Refutation)

Handwriting - memory work copywork, handwritten writing assignments

Grammar - Junior Analytical Grammar or Well Ordered Language

Sixth grade - Eighth grade

Reading- CCC reading - independent, audible

Spelling - AAS through levels, or switch to Phonetic Zoo after Level 3

Writing - CCC writing assignment with supervision over multiple days

(Narrative, expansive, descriptive writing, Confirmation, Refutation,
Lost Tools of Writing)

Handwriting - memory work copywork, handwritten writing assignments

Grammar - Analytical Grammar or Well Ordered Language

*Lost Tools of Writing year requires a very different kind of prewriting conversation - be on the lookout for parent info from instructor