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# Your 3rd grader's writing under Common Core Standards

Great!  
SCHOOLS (1)

“More” is the word to describe your child's writing this year: more research, more detail, and more facility with language.

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This year, consider the writing bar officially raised. Your child's stories will amaze you, showing character development and dialogue. Your child's opinion pieces and informational writing will be more organized and thorough. With this blossoming of writing prowess, your child will be using more sophisticated language, improved grammar, and overall heightened mastery of the form from beginning to end.

## Building 3rd grade study skills

Under the Common Core Standards, third graders are expected to use books, websites, and other digital sources (think electronic newspaper records at the library) to do research projects and to build knowledge about different topics — both on their own and as part of group work with their peers. But there's a new, research-based twist this year: taking notes. Third graders need to start writing down what they learn from each

source they use, keeping track of the source name and page so they are able to find it again, and then practice sorting any evidence they find into relevant categories that, at this stage, the teacher will likely determine.

## 3rd grade opinion pieces

Of course your child has an opinion — and here's how she learns to share it in writing! Opinion pieces will likely start with your child reading a couple of books and responding to what she's learned. Your child should start her opinion piece by clearly introducing her topic, stating her opinion, and then giving multiple reasons to support her opinion. She should practice using linking words (e.g. *because, therefore, since, for example*) to connect her reasons to her opinion, and then end her writing with a conclusion.

## 3rd grade informative writing

The purpose of informative writing is to convey facts and ideas clearly. After introducing his topic, your child should group related information into a few clear, well thought-out points. He should develop these points using facts, definitions, and details and using linking words (e.g. *also, another, and, more, but*) to connect his ideas within each point. Your child can also include illustrations when they may help make or clarify a point. Finally, he should end his work with a concluding sentence or two.

### **Can your third grader write an informational essay?**

## 3rd grade narrative writing

Narrative is just a fancy word for story — and this year your child's stories will be much more interesting and complex. Using a narrator, characters, dialogue, and descriptive details, your third grader's writing should show a story unfolding — including how the characters feel and respond to what happens. The sequence of events should be clear thanks to careful use of descriptive words, sentence order, verb tense, and temporal words (e.g. *after, following, later*). Be sure not to let your child's story simply stop by writing "The End". Instead, the story should read like it's coming to a close.

Check out this related worksheet:

- [How to write a story \(/worksheets-activities/6574-how-to-write-a-story.gs\)](#)

# What's a "range of writing"?

Third grade is the first year that a new writing standard — called simply “a range of writing” — is introduced in the Common Core Standards. It's part of the effort to get students writing more — and more often. Your child's assignments will vary, but you can expect a series of short sit-and-write assignments, as well as longer projects that span weeks or months, giving students the chance to reflect and revise their work over time.



## ~~bttr~~, better, best!

Expect to see your child spending more time writing this year, whether he's in the planning, writing, revising, or editing phase. While **planning**, your child may read or reread books on the topic, discuss his ideas aloud, brainstorm ideas, gather and organize information visually, jot down notes about the points he'll make, and start to think about the structure of the piece. Once a **first draft** is in, the teacher or other students will go over it with your child. They'll ask questions and suggest details or facts that could be added, clarified, or improved. Do your child's word choices convey what he means? Is there an introduction and a conclusion? Are the story's events in order? Using all these questions and suggestions as guidance, your child will do a **revision**, adding to, reordering, and refining the content. After one or more revisions, the teacher might help your child with the final **edit** — focusing on spelling and grammar, capitalizing proper nouns, ensuring nouns and verbs are in agreement, and checking that periods, commas, and quotation marks are used correctly. Following these steps — planning, writing a first draft, revising their work, and editing the final piece — teaches third graders that gathering information, organizing their thoughts, strengthening and clarifying their ideas, and improving grammar and presentation are all key to quality writing.

## See what third grade writing looks like

## A red-letter year for grammar!

Is your memory of grammar rules a little rusty? You may want to review the parts of speech so you can keep up with your third grader. Under the Common Core Standards, this year your child will learn the functions of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs — and what role they play in a sentence. By year's end, your child should be using regular and irregular plural nouns (e.g. *president/presidents* and *child/children*),

abstract nouns (e.g. *childhood*), and regular and irregular verbs in simple past, present, and future tense (e.g. *stopped/stop/will stop* and *knew/know/will know*) — all while ensuring subject-verb agreement (e.g. *I know/he knows*) and pronoun-antecedent agreement (e.g. *The students put on their jackets.*) Your child should also use comparative adjectives and adverbs (e.g. *big/bigger/biggest* and *quickly/quicker/quickest*) and choose between them based on whether they're modifying nouns (adjectives) or verbs (adverbs). In writing compound and complex sentences, your child will use conjunctions that show connection (e.g. *and, or, but*) and dependence (e.g. *if, when, because*).

Check out this related worksheet:

- Big, bigger, biggest (/worksheets-activities/6592-big-bigger-biggest-2.gs)
- Verb machine! (/worksheets-activities/6619-verb-machine.gs)
- 3rd grade spelling list #15: irregular plural nouns (/worksheets-activities/7728-3rd-grade-spelling-words-list-15-of-36.gs)

## Perfecting spelling and punctuation

Armed with phonetic awareness and more refined storytelling skills, third graders should use what they know about spelling patterns to spell new words as accurately as possible. And when they don't know? Time to check the dictionary!

But this year's not just about spelling. Third graders should use increasingly precise words. This means honing word-sense skills like understanding root words (e.g. knowing that *add* is the root of *addition* and *additional*), choosing among synonyms for the right word (e.g. *knew, believed, suspected, heard, wondered*), and using words to signal timing (e.g. *after, then, later*). With all this focus on word nuance, your child may need a thesaurus handy. When making their final edits, third graders should capitalize words in titles, use commas and quotation marks for quotes and their characters' dialogues, and add apostrophes to form possessives. They'll also take the next step in writing letters: mastering the fine art of addressing envelopes (e.g. 1461 Chestnut St., Apt. 303, Gloucester, MA).

Check out these related worksheets:

- 3rd grade weekly spelling lists (/worksheets/third-grade/wordlists/)
- Proofreading (/worksheets-activities/6569-proofreading.gs)
- Prefix practice (/worksheets-activities/6557-prefix-practice-mis--non--ex--co--anti-.gs)

- Addressing letters (</worksheets-activities/6556-addressing-letters.gs>)
- Writing practice: alternatives to “said” (</worksheets-activities/6563-writing-practice-alternatives-to-said.gs>)

## And it’s live!

Under the Common Core Standards, when the research is done — and the planning, writing, revisions, and edits are complete — the final step for some of your third grader’s writing is to publish the work. The format is open — printing or electronic publishing on a blog, website, or even an app — but the standards clearly state that your third grader should have some keyboarding skills by the end of the year. It’s a new level of independence and tech savvy-ness. And while adults should be there to help out, your child should become comfortable taking the lead.

## What about the big H?

Despite what you may have heard, the Common Core Standards didn’t do away with handwriting — but neither did they spell out specific benchmarks. Nevertheless, your child still needs to know how to write legibly — and that means penmanship matters. Traditionally, third grade is when students learn cursive, so it’s a great idea to ask the teacher whether or not they’ll be learning cursive in class. If not — and if it’s a skill you want your child to have — then you may want to work on this craft with your child at home. One thing the standards spell out quite clearly for third graders? Learning some keyboarding skills so they can help produce and publish their work. Though the teacher can and should still lead this process, this year your child should be able to do some typing, too.

*Updated November 2013 to align with the Common Core Standards*

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◆ *Common Core (<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/tag/common-core/>), Standards (<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/tag/standards/>)*



### **About the author**

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