



Writing Reflex

Writing, writing, and more writing is the only way to improve writing; but how can we encourage this writing when every aspect of the task is a challenge! Here's a way to make a game out of the necessity for writing practice.

Gather up a collection of subject idea cards (or use the subject idea cards on the second page of this document). For added appeal, pictures can be mounted and laminated on uniform card stock. Black cardstock may help the highest percentage of pictures look their best. Some nature or travel post cards or old family photos can serve well. Another source could be storybook illustrations, pictures from sports pages, or even advertisements. All you need is a springboard or a suggestion that can be carried in any direction to make a story. Students may want to collect their own pictures or even to try making a set of inkblots for the purpose.

Visualizing and shaping stories has to come before actual writing, and all those ideas have to be able to stay in mind in spite of the distractions of letter formation and spelling. If this brainstorming can be made fun, children will take to it and get better and better. The goal is to have writing ideas come as naturally and easily as **reflexes!** Cross your legs and tap under your knee to make the point! **Reflexes are real!**

Directions:

Spread out the cards face up on the table. Each player chooses a card for the other player, and each writes all he can to start a story without too much labored forethought. It is all right if the idea seems to be quite a stretch from the picture. As long as the connection or suggestion can be explained, it's a go.

Alternatively consider one of these **variations:**

- A student can choose a card for both himself and his parent or tutor
- There can be a 15 second time allowed for both players to choose a card
- All cards can be upside down and players can draw their writing cards.

If players have some point system in place, they can earn one point or \$1.00 of play money for every word they write in the agreed upon time limit – at first, suggesting a very short time limit such as two or three minutes might give energy to the task. If the second player is a teacher or parent, they should earn 1/2, 1/3 or 1/4 point per word. A player can win a round by earning the most points or just having any idea of how to get a picture to lead into a story. For warm-up, the first round or two can be done orally. Following up on the writing start, players can also be given \$1.00 for each proofreading correction they catch, with or without any teacher-hints!

Subject Idea Picture Cards

