

## Writing for Children

Whether is it a puzzle, story, or poem, it competes with the modern world of computer and video games. It must capture their attention and keep it! It must make them want to turn the page. It also needs to appeal to the senses.

### Stories need:

- A purpose/focus
- Emotion, usually through a vulnerable character
- Action in form of a struggle, or series of struggles
- Choices that bring about a discovery
- A resolution, usually with a change in the character

### Even Games and puzzles must captivate

- Multi-level
  - Not a word search only, but a word search that involves hunting for a hidden message from letters not in circled words
  - Not just a crossword puzzle but a rebus for younger children or a fill-in-the-blank story with the blanks being crossword puzzle words
- Humor added-put in the wacky thoughts too
- Must have a purpose, i.e. present unusual facts or sum up a lesson.

### **PIZZAZZ** adds to excitement/captivates children

- Sound effects (Onomatopoeia Words)
- Interaction with reader (personalization, choose ending, pop up windows, etc.)
- Repetition that later has a twist to it
- Humor
- Pace (slow, fast, change of pace)
- Crescendo and decrescendo
- Intensity
- Exaggeration
- Children fill in ending or write on re-write-able pages (and other novelty book approaches)

Does it make SENSE by **appealing to all senses?**

See          Hear          Smell          Taste          Touch

**WORDS...WORDS...WORDS make a difference!**

Move from boring to exciting with active verbs and sensory appeal

Circle every verb. Ask: Does it show or tell  
Does it appeal to a sense?

**Boring:**

The noisy wind scared the children. (This tells but does not show)

First look at action verbs or lack thereof

**Better:** (Use sounds and verbs to show the wind and the noises it makes)

Bang! The door shut!

Rattle, rattle, rattle the windows shook.

Rustle, rustle, rustle went the leaves

Hhhhoowwwlllll went the wind as it squeezed through branches.

Or use actions with sounds.

Woosh! The boat shook!

Crash! Bang! The boat slammed into the rocks

Whack! The little boat smashed into pieces.

**Now you try it:**

---

---

---

Show don't tell about feelings (Use verbs and descriptions that show the fear)

Rattle, rattle, rattle went my teeth!

Pop! Pop! Pop! Goosebumps covered my arms!

I shook from my head to my toes!

Then I started to twirl and spin around. I couldn't stop.

I tried to grab my friends but they whirled away like spinning tops.

**Try** describing a child or children scared by the wind

---

---

### Through a child's eyes

Become a child again (fill out info on you as this child)...imagine (explore the world as this child) and discover how to enter a child's world with excitement!

My name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite things \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My favorite toy is \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite toy is \_\_\_\_\_

I like \_\_\_\_\_

I don't like \_\_\_\_\_

I can do lots of things. I can \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What scares me is \_\_\_\_\_

What I need is \_\_\_\_\_

I want \_\_\_\_\_

I have a problem. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What surprises me \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What makes me laugh \_\_\_\_\_

I'm special because \_\_\_\_\_

What makes me cry is \_\_\_\_\_



## More Tips on writing for children

### 1. Children's magazines compete with online fun

Grabbing children's attention competes with online fun, so it needs to offer edutainment and that is done with layering the writing and weaving in humor. They are used to the Disney WOW and razzle dazzle online.

Layering example: Use words underlined in a story as word list for a word search and use uncircled letters in word search to reveal a secret message

### 2. Articles need to reach a child's abilities and understanding

Know the child's language and reading vocabulary

### 3. Do not bore a child, but make reading fun

Engage children with humor, making them squirm, surprising them, or intrigue them

### 4. Help children feel and care about others (they do not naturally have compassion or understand what someone else is going through)

Use truth, fresh perspectives and examples to connect emotionally.

Use engaging characters and new ideas to illuminate minds (not sanitized views) and motivate kids to be world changers and to care about needs of other people.

They want to be empowered to help others, so share a few starter ideas

They want to build relationships and so they need to understand other people

### 5. Build in word clues because children are learning and not all know the same words, but it frustrates them to not understand what they are reading.

When using unfamiliar provide context clues

Examples:

- The speaker received a small stipend, or payment, for her talk.
- The leader said, "Climbing the mountain is grueling. You'll be very tired when we reach the top."

### 6. Tap into Senses

- Sight sets the scene: tire swing in yard, old door creaked, spiky hair
- Noise (hearing) lays a sound track: giggle, chortle, growl, wheel screeched
- Scents evoke memories (chicken pot pie, smelly socks, sour milk, rain in the air)
- Touch evoke emotions (feelings of pain, pleasure) pricked his finger, kitten's rough tongue licked his cheek, he slid on the wet, slippery, rocks
- Taste taps into hunger, thirst, memories: munched the crunchy chips, licked the vanilla ice cream, tasted the salty ocean breeze
- 

### 7. Children's periodicals often use theme lists, so check and see if one you want to write for does and then submit for the appropriate theme.

8. Easiest way to break in is usually with games and puzzles
9. Read the letters to the editor and children's comments to get ideas of what they like
10. Know the age level you are writing for and differences on how to write for them
  - Young children enjoy onomatopoeia
  - Children like a main character to be a little older than their own age
  - Tweens are at the crossroads between concrete thinking and abstract, critical thinking. They want help navigating their world, but it must sound real to them.

## **ABCs of Children/Family markets**

Articles, activities, action rhymes, allegories, and anthologies

Board books, board games, bulleting boards, biographies, Bible studies, Boys magazines

Columns, children's church, curriculum, crafts, comics, coloring pictures, calendars, celebrity profiles

Dramas, devotions, detective stories

Easy reader stories & activities, early readers, experiments

Family activities in parenting magazines, fantasy, fiction, facts, fables, fast food containers, fairy tales, finger plays

Games, group activities, Girl's magazines, gardening

Humor, home schooling, historical facts and stories, how-tos

Internet magazines, interviews, inspirational ideas, index card pullouts

Journal pages, junior church programs, jokes, junior high helps, juvenile fiction

Kid recipes

Library magazines, lesson plans, local papers, lent programs

Multi-cultural activities, missionary stories, mother-daughter articles/activities, museums

Novelty books, newsletters, newspapers, neighborhood papers, Nature magazines

Object lessons

Poetry, prayers, puppet shows, puzzles, product activities, pamphlets, parables,

Quizzes, questions, quick activities, quite time activities,

Reviews of books and products, rebus stories, riddles

© Karen H Whiting  
www.karenwhiting.com

Sidebars, songs, short stories, sports, suspense, secret codes, skits

Take-home papers, true stories, tween magazines, travel magazines

Unique ministries, unsung kid heroes

Video reviews, Vacation Bible school materials, video scripts

Worship programs and helps, website reviews

Xeroxable activities

Youth magazines, yarns

Zoo facts and zoo displays

## **Resources**

*You Can Write Children's Books* by Tracey E. Dils

*Be Our Guest* from the Disney Institute (how to add pizzazz and relate to readers)

*Writing and Selling Children's Books in the Christian Market* by Cyle Young and Michelle Medlock Adams

*Yes! You Can Learn How to Write Children's Books, Get Them Published, and Build a Successful Writing Career* by Nancy I. Sanders

Blog

<https://christianchildrensauthors.com/>