



The Writing Bandscales document 9 levels of writing development, from initial exposure to print-based literacy through to written proficiency. They are designed specifically for teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who speak a language other than Standard Australian English in their home or community environment

### Junior Primary Writing Bandscales:

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***Pre-level 1:***

**Newly introduced to the concept of writing:** drawing on knowledge of their world in Home Language (HL), through play. May have cultural understanding that there are people in their community who write for particular purposes, eg. Council worker, shop-keepers. May explore the use of symbols in their immediate environment with available resources (eg. Finger-painting, turtle tracks in the sand).

**Will play as the initial form of self-expression.**

**Will prefer to use construction materials and objects to represent ideas rather than draw.**

**May have well-developed fine motor skills, spatial awareness and gross motor skills.**

**May have awareness of body limitations as demonstrated through dance, balance and rhythmic activities.**

**May use HL when communicating ideas.**

- Are new to the use of literacy implements such as pencils or crayons.
- May be familiar with the use of environmental materials as writing implements, eg. Sticks in sand, using leaves as story-telling implements.
- Are aware of environmental print to varying degrees.
- Are exposed to variations of English (eg. SAE, non-standard English) through media, conversations with people such as hospital staff, etc.
- May exhibit behaviours such as withdrawal, avoidance and distractability due to mismatch between home culture and school culture.

**Note:** Family interactions with print are relative to the availability of printed material, adult literacy competencies and preferred literacy modes (Adults may prefer to use oral modes as a deliberate choice to preserve their oral culture and language).

**Level 1:**

**New to writing:** drawing on knowledge of the world in their HL (and in SAE for some) and beginning to explore print literacy. May have cultural understanding that there are people in their community who write for particular purposes.

**Will use drawing as an initial form of self-expression and will use HL in attempts to talk about drawing.**

**Will make approximations of letters and symbols, may be inconsistent in assigning meanings.**

**Are beginning to develop concepts of classroom literacy, and are gaining an understanding of the school context.**

- Are becoming aware of print and making scribbles that look like letters, eg. Writing notes in Home Corner.
- Are developing their understandings about the school context and about literacy at this level.
- May be beginning to attach oral SAE labels to drawings or constructions.
- May rely heavily on HL to help them talk about drawing and role-play writing.
- May be confident in using literacy implements.
- May be aware of environmental print.

**Level 2:**

**Beginning to experiment with and attach meaning to their writing in an approximation of SAE:** drawing on knowledge of the world in HL and attempting to do so in SAE and literacy. May have cultural understanding that there are people in their community who write for particular purposes including themselves.

**Will draw pictures as the context for their writing.**

**Can respond to yes/no questions in SAE about their pictures for teacher to expand and scribe.**

**Will experiment with writing letters and words.**

**Will copy from environmental print to label pictures and write own name.**

- Will be able to provide only limited comments in SAE about their pictures because of beginning proficiency in spoken SAE, however with a strong HL background will be able to give more detail in their HL.
- Will experiment with writing and may exhibit some writing-like behaviour, eg. random strings of letters, approximations to letters.
- Will attach a consistent message to their writing but exact words may change in rereading/retelling.
- Will be confident to copy print from books, other children's work and/or environmental print.
- Can remember exact location of specific words in environmental print and will refer frequently to these.
- Will be yet to develop confidence in risk-taking when writing independently.
- Will be aware of where to begin writing and be beginning to use left to right orientation.
- Will generally use the most obvious consonant sounds when representing a word.

***Pre- level 3:***

**Beginning to write using simple sentence structures:** drawing on knowledge of the world in HL and SAE.

Are beginning to write, as captions to their drawings, their own simple sentence/s, relying on retelling experiences and drawing from home environment.

Are drawing on personally significant events and people, usually written in first person (eg. I/we ). Influences of the HL on oral development in SAE will be reflected in their writing.

Are assigning a consistent message to their writing in SAE, and will repeat simple structures in future writing attempts to provide self with success. Peers may share and copy successful pieces of writing.

- May exhibit creative expression in HL that in SAE would appear stilted.
- May write sentences containing HL words or phrases due to the lack of explicit knowledge of the differences between HL and SAE. (eg. *Mipla* went to the jetty.).
- May exhibit frustration at lack of success, and may show this by withdrawing from the task.
- Will be using invented spelling.
- May be using some conventional spelling of high frequency words. Spelling may reflect learner's pronunciation of SAE (e.g. We went *oba dere*).
- May wish to express themselves in writing in HL (if able to do so). (eg. *Mipla bin go go go*).
- May seek out successful sentence/s from previous work or peers to copy. This strategy enables success and develops confidence and is a scaffold to accessing environmental print.
- May experience difficulties in acquiring the ability to hear and identify sounds within words due to HL structure and sounds and if child has hearing impairment due to Otitis Media. eg. difficulty hearing prominent sounds such as 'h, p/f, b/v'; separating the sounds of a word in sequence.

### **Level 3:**

**Beginning to write their very own short texts, (often still as captions) in SAE: drawing on knowledge of the world in HL and SAE.**

**Are beginning to write their own usually very short texts (eg. Early recount).**

**Are consistently assigning messages to their writing in SAE. Influences of the HL on oral development in SAE will be reflected in their writing. Written language will be affected by limited proficiency in speaking and listening in SAE.**

- Can write beyond the immediate environment and beyond previously known language only if patterning and modelling is provided by the teacher.
- May seek constant affirmation through the writing process.
- Are beginning to write more complex sentences, relying on basic connectors (and, but). There is less need for teacher transcription, as they develop an ability to use the conventions of writing in SAE (eg. are writing more legibly; spelling is becoming more conventional, using sight-words and word-banks, or invented spelling close enough to be predicted by the reader. As they experiment with their own writing, samples may show omitted verbs, tense/time relationship difficulties, inappropriate or no prepositions, possessives that may reflect HL, inappropriate word orders.
- May use patterns of HL storytelling (Narrative) in their writing, eg. Repeating and rephrasing a statement or constant use of conjunctions, (eg. use of "and") within a passage. Culturally appropriate intonation and emphasis of the spoken HL form may not transfer effectively to the written SAE form influencing teachers' interpretation of the written text. The teacher may misinterpret the student's purpose in using these features, eg. The child may write a narrative and use multiple repetitions for stylistic effect which the teacher may mistake as repetition to make the text appear longer. An understanding of the students' HL can assist the teacher to point out the differences between the HL and SAE. (See Towards a More User-Friendly Education for speakers of Aboriginal SAE (1999), Malcolm, et. al, p. 54).
- Are beginning to demonstrate explicit knowledge of differences between HL and SAE (Given that this is being explicitly taught).
- Are developing skills in editing, but ability to do this in their writing and spelling, without support, is limited by overall proficiency in SAE.

**Level 4:**

**Applying understandings about text types to writing in SAE:** drawing on knowledge of the world in HL and SAE, and on HL and SAE language and literacy (to varying degrees).

Can write simple short versions of an expanding range of text types on familiar topics (e.g., simple letters without format, greetings in cards, simple descriptions, simple recounts). However, even though early text structure is evident, ESL features are clearly present and meaning will sometimes break down.

Need strong support (e.g. pre-task and post-task talk, modeling, joint construction of texts, conferencing by teacher, provision of vocabulary) and need more time than their SAE-speaking peers. Writing will be influenced by overall proficiency in SAE.

Are beginning to write texts containing related ideas around a central topic or theme.

- Are becoming more aware of audience and purpose.
- May wish to express themselves in writing in HL (if able to do so).
- Will use a small range of connectors (eg., but, and, and other cohesive devices e.g., will use pronouns to refer back to prior text (The man....he/his.) Writing will continue to reflect features of learner's spoken language in SAE including errors in verb tense/time orientation, subject/verb agreement, pronouns etc. as they form hypotheses about SAE. Spelling may reflect learners' oral pronunciation.

**Level 5:**

**Developing control over language and text in SAE, but writing is still limited by proficiency in SAE:** drawing on knowledge of the world in HL and SAE, and on HL and SAE language and literacy (to varying degrees).

Can write with some fluency (perhaps with limited length) some familiar written text types (eg., personal letters, greetings, descriptions, recounts and narratives) on familiar topics; continue to need support (eg., pre- and post-task talk, modelling, joint construction of texts, conferencing by teacher, provision of vocabulary) and more time than their HL-speaking peers. Although English as a Second Language features occur, these generally do not impede meaning.

- Are able to write more fluently as they experiment with written language, and gain more control over writing strategies and over SAE. May wish to express themselves in writing in HL (if able to do so).
- Have a growing range of vocabulary. ESL features include errors in tense/time orientation, omission of articles, etc. Spelling differences from standard forms (possibly due to pronunciation difficulties) will occur. These English as a Second Language features will generally not impede overall meaning, although this may sometimes occur, for eg., if key vocabulary or spelling is unclear.

**Level 6:**

**Becoming competent writers in SAE** (within the range expected at the later stages of junior primary): drawing on their knowledge of the world in HL and SAE and, and on HL and SAE language and literacy (to varying degrees).

**Can write most texts at the level expected at the later stages of junior primary, eg. narratives, lists, recounts, instructions, etc. Are now supported by a well-developed overall proficiency in SAE that is reflected in their writing. However ESL features will still occasionally appear. Fluency and speed are increasing which in turn influence the length of text learners are able to produce.**

- Need more time than their SAE peers to write, to process thoughts and concepts prior to and during writing in SAE.
- May wish to express themselves in writing in SAE (if able to do so).
- Have a growing proficiency in SAE which is reflected in features of their written language such as growing control of text structure, in correct tense/time orientation, and in a well-developed vocabulary range (for their level of schooling).
- ESL features include occasional difficulties, for eg., with articles, quantity, but these will rarely impede meaning.

**Level 7:**

**Competent writers in SAE** (within the range expected at the later stages of junior primary): drawing on their knowledge of the world in HL and SAE, and on HL and SAE language and literacy (to varying degrees).

**Are competent writers in SAE (within the range expected at the later stages of junior primary). Can write for a range of purposes and audiences, and across a range of contexts across the curriculum. Can write without the need for extra time. Are able to draw on a well-developed overall proficiency in SAE.**

- Will sometimes need support over and above that provided for all learners (eg. Provision of background knowledge and cultural understanding) with new topics which are outside their range of experience or different from their HL cultural norms (eg. Humour, beliefs).
- May wish to express themselves in writing in HL (if able to do so).

**Additional Background Information:**

Will continue to benefit from using their HL with HL speaking peers and adults.