Writing Measures

What are First Author™ Writing Measures?

First Author™ Writing Measures are a comprehensive group of measurement tools for beginning student writers. The measures *(the Developmental Writing Scale, text type diversity, topic diversity, total intelligible words, and unique words)* monitor writing growth in the earliest stages of writing over time. First Author™ Writing Measures are appropriate for both young, typically developing children and students with mild to significant disabilities of all ages.

Who *Exactly* Should Use First Author™ Writing Measures?

First Author™ Writing Measures are appropriate for all emergent writers including writers with learning disabilities, speech and language impairments, physical disabilities, severe speech and physical impairments (SSPI), intellectual developmental disabilities (IDD), and autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

The scale is also appropriate for typically-developing children. The age range begins with children as young as three years of age, as they begin to develop a range of emergent writing skills, and transition into conventional writing by the end of second grade.

First Author™ Writing Measures

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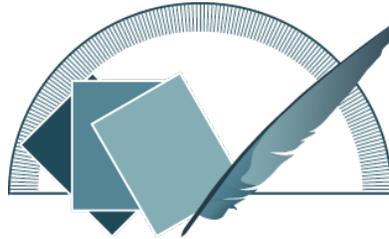For information about the authors visit
Author Biographies

Developmental Writing Scale

The Developmental Writing Scale (DWS) is a research-based scale that detects the smallest developmental progressions as students move from drawing and scribbling to paragraph writing.

The DWS is the *anchor* measure: all other First Author™ Writing Measures should be viewed though the lens of the DWS. The relevance of the other measures depends on where a student is on the DWS (i.e. text type diversity is not an appropriate measure for students within levels one through three).

The DWS is sensitive enough to detect the subtle differences in early writing development, which is particularly relevant when measuring students with significant disabilities. The use of accommodations for students with disabilities may be essential for growth (see the accommodations section within the DWS scale for guidance).

The DWS is a reliable measure of progress that informs the instruction necessary to move students to the next level of writing.

Purpose: To identify the overall developmental writing level of the student writer

How to use the Developmental Writing Scale

- Student writing should be samples of original text production, not immediately influenced by teacher or clinician scaffolding.
- During writing, students should be allowed access to any accommodations.
- If you are debating between two levels, assign the lowest level.
- Focus on the nature of the student's writing (or prewriting), not the spatial placement of text on a page (e.g., paragraph spacing, indentation, or margins).
- Concepts of word, sentence, and paragraph are primarily linguistic in nature.
- Student names at the top of the page (denoting who wrote it) are not counted; however, student names in the body of the text are scored on the scale.
- Score based on graphic content only (i.e., avoid being influenced by additional context provided orally by the student).

Use the following descriptions to assign a single level to each writing sample. If you are debating between two levels, assign the lowest level.

Use the descriptions below to assign a single level to each writing sample.

If you are debating between two levels, assign the lowest level.

1. Drawing Only

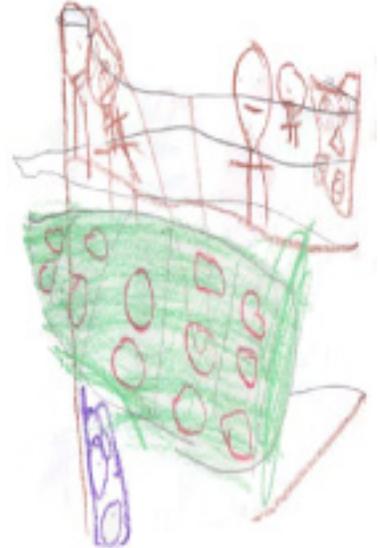Lines and curves that appear to represent objects.

Tip: If you are working with a student who is unable to accomplish the scoring criteria (in this case, drawing) through traditional means - see firstauthoronline.com for accomodation ideas. Again, all Accommodations should be available to the student while writing. ***Do not spend a lot of time accommodating for drawing -*** *Have students choose a photograph for their topic and start writing.*

Resources for photos:
Flickr: http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/
Wikimedia Commons: http://commons.wikimedia.org/
Edupics: http://www.edupics.com/

2. Scribble Writing

Continuous vertical, circular, or wavy lines arranged linearly across the page which may include letter-like forms but with the majority of shapes not recognizable as letters.

3. Recognizable Letters in Nonword Strings

Letter-like forms have some recognizable letters in strings but not grouped into words. One or more forms represent or resemble printed or cursive alphabetic letters.

4. Strings of Letters Grouped into "Prewords"

Strings of letters grouped into "prewords" (spaces between at least two groups of letters, but with no intelligible words).

iLCR6q iLKVKC CPRSB WRKe BRKe   Hya L kirio s pDriD

5. Strings of Letters Grouped Into "Words"

Strings of letters grouped into "words" with only one possible real word, two or more letters in length and set apart; may be written repeatedly (e.g., dog, dog, dog), or embedded in a string of letters.

IMPICOTheC   MyIuonipwlois omoqleyos
                              Myeollioritewois

6. Two to Three Different Intelligible Words

Two to three different intelligible words embedded in strings, separated by spaces, or in a list format. Single letter words such as "I" and "a" must be separated by spaces to count as an intelligible word.
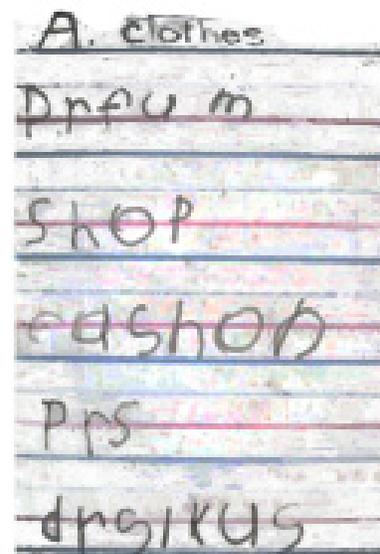
A DRAGIN   Lunch
                             Time
                             work

7. More Than Three Words in a List

More than three different intelligible words in a list format.

Lltons
Football
Dethott
Lbons
This

A. clothes
Prfu m
ShOP
eashop
Pps
drgikus

8. More Than Three Words, Two in Partially Formed Sentence

More than three different intelligible words, with at least two of them in a partially formed sentence (i.e., grammatically related parts of a phrase, clause or sentence).

> Me at HRHe. On BRtDoY.
> APRIL25

> Tom car cars red fast. Fastr fun cars. Mom mom. Cars, blue, yellow blue orange. Love cars. The end.

9. Subject Phrase and a Verb Phrase

One to two complete sentences with a subject phrase and a verb phrase. End punctuation is not necessary.

> We Ro gowg to The Big SliDe To SliDon A FASD onthefewtrrep Me And My Daddy R Play with Mounika.

> Alvin and the Chimpmuks
> They sing and dance

10. Minimum of Three Sentences, but No Topic

A minimum of three sentences, but with no coherent topic (i.e., sentences are evident, but they are not clearly related).

> I play a game. I went to my fnid house. I went to get a egg to eat. I went to chansh on Sun day. I kiss my momer sun day. I can walk my dog. I sat in my house. I went to the saing in ring.

> Happy Birthday Matthew. I like chocolate please Mom. I have a new school. Am 14. A new pet is a puppies and a dog and a cat and a shirt and a new baby.

11. Organized Writing, Coherent Topic, Limited Cohesion

Organized writing with three or more sentences on a coherent topic but with limited cohesion between sentences (i.e., sentences can be reordered without changing meaning).

> I love to watch the garbageman to pick up our trash can to. I don't watch the garman out to my window to. I love to watch the recycling person to get my recycling from my house to.
>
> Kristen I went on a pane so did I wish I was sleeping flying, My Mom was with me

> Frogs are eggs. Frog are cool. I no how a frog grows egg then grow mory. Frog eat lot of things that we don't eat like bugs. I want a frog to play with. I thak frogs are mumloss because thae swim.

12. Organized Writing, Coherent Topic, Cohesive Devices

Organized writing with a coherent topic (i.e., on a consistent theme) and use of cohesive devices (e.g., pronoun or synonym replacement, logical connectors, subordinating conjunctions, conclusions that refer to prior content) across three or more sentences, so that sentences cannot be reordered without changing meaning.

On monday my frid came over my house. We played and we had fun. She lath. She what houm I clin up my mast.

I Love the move cars
because is my faris move
because Lighting Mcqueen
is on teh move Lightirgncqueen
ges stuck in the dith.
and lightingmcqueen has
friends sally
and lightingmcqueen goes
fast and hehasa fnind
Mater

13. Organized Writing, Coherent Topic, Two Cohesive Subsections

Organized writing with a coherent main topic and two cohesive subsections (sub-topics or story parts) with at least two sentences elaborating the meaning of each.

The poll at my house opende up it was callde the pig picin and we went swiming ther and it was very very very fun to me. My babey seter took me to the stoer at I got so spra cande and some wacs coke bodolls with some drek cande it was very very very good cande. We eat food and food and food. I eat my food then I fellt the woder and it was very very very coold so I stod and te top step of the poll. My friends cris and darice wer ther and I stad ther a lidoll bit and then I rode my bike bake home and I went to bed and I went to slep!

My dad got the New IPad it's like a iPod but it's tiwse as big it mostley for work but you can wath moves and Play games I like how it feels it's alsom be cost you can also wath youtub I like how the scaren size it's Medom size it also fun to yose be cost my dad bot u cast for it and it can hold it up or if you are working you can put it done but the oley thang I don't like is the wate it's a praty have IPad but if you want to see it's size you can turn the paepre ourond

14. Organized Writing, Coherent Topic, Three Cohesive Subsections

Organized writing with a coherent main topic and at least 3 cohesive subsections (sub-topics or story parts) with at least two sentences elaborating the meaning of each.

Me and my mom are going shopping for school clothes. For next year. When me and my mom go clothes shopping and sometimes we buy some new shoes. I like to go shopping with my Aunt Mandy. She buys me whatever I want. Like last time I went shopping with her. Last time I went shopping with her she brante me some new earrings and they are so cool for me. I like going shopping with my grandma singer she likes to go shopping with her and when I go shopping with my grandma she buys me a ring that is red. I love it so much. I like to take my cousins shopping to They love it when I take them shopping I buy them everthing they want. But I tell them that if They do not listen to me or their mom and dad I will not take them shopping ever again. I go shopping by myself and when I do I buy my mom and dad something and they love it. Before my grandpa passed away we used to go shopping all the time but now its just me and my mom, grandma, Aunt mandy and my cousins going shopping. I want to go shopping so bad with my mom and my grandma when I go home today I am going to ask my mom and see if we can go shopping with my grandma singer. And if we can we are going shopping so bad.

One morning my mom told me where mooveing tomorrow. I was scared. That night I dramed that a dragon swooped down and ate the car. The next day I said gooby to my freinbsand left. I was releved wen wegothere. I helped onpack. This time I was wored about school. It started tomorrow. That night I braned the teacher was the menest teacher im all the land. The naxt morning I got up got breseb and went to school. Wan I god there the teacher gave us cookies. Indsted of the menest teacher in all the land she was niceisd teacher in the hole intir world. The End

Topic Diversity

Purpose of the measure:
To quantify the variations in self-selected topics chosen by student writers.

Each writing sample will be assigned a topic (overall gist).

The number of different types of topics composed across multiple writing samples will be measured.

How to use the Topic Diversity measurement

- Review the picture *and/or* words used by the student in the writing sample.
- What is the main topic or *gist* (What is it about?) of the writing sample?
- Label the topic by creating a *key word or phrase* that represents the overall gist.
- If the picture and text do not match, use the text as your primary source for scoring the topic.
- If the student topic is *unidentifiable - score the topic as unclear.*
- If the student writing is in a list with *many topics - score as unconnected list.*

Text Type Diversity

Purpose of the measure:
To quantify the variations in self-selected text types chosen by student writers.

Each writing sample will be assigned a type of text type.

If there is more than one text type in a writing sample:

a) If one text type has more than 50% of the sentences, score as that text type.

b) If both text types are represented equally, score as the first text type in the sample.

The number of different types of text types composed across multiple writing samples will be measured.

Emergent

Graphic expression using drawings, pencil marks, scribbles, a string of letters, or letter-like forms.

Tip: Is it a graphic expression using drawings, pencil markings, scribbles, a string of letters, or letter-like forms?
If yes, it's *emergent*.
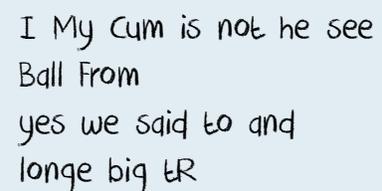
I My Cum is not he see
Ball From
yes we said to and
longe big tR

Label

Describe elements of a drawing.

Tip: Are the words focused on the drawing? If yes, it's a *label* (e.g., "Me and mom at the store.")

A DRAGIN

Me at HRHe. On BRtDOY. APRIL25

Story

Create an imaginary event.

Tip: Is the verb in the past tense? If yes, is it:

fictional (story) (e.g., One day Charlie went to the store.)

factual (recount) (e.g., Yesterday I went to the store.)

The lost Girl. Once upon atime there was a girl and her name was Stacy. Once when Stacy's mother took her to the toy store her mother told her to hold her hand so she wouldn't get lost...

once upon there was a squirrel The squirrel got to get surgery. The squirrel had to get his tail cut off. The squirrel had to get some popcorn. The squirrel did not brush his teeth at all...

Personal Narrative

Recount a past event.

Tip: Is the verb in the past tense? If yes, is it:

fictional (story) (e.g., One day Charlie went to the store.)

factual (recount) (e.g., Yesterday I went to the store.)

On monday my frid came over my house. We played and we had fun. She lath. She what houm I clin up my mast.

We went camping. My grandpa and Grandma were there. my Mom and Dad were there. My brother was there WE slept in tents and had a camp fire and we had a picnic.

Plan

Plan a future event.

Tip: Is the verb in the future tense? If yes, it's a *plan* (e.g., After school I am going to the store.)

> The egg ra going to hatch.
> It will be fn
>
> I want a thomas toy box
> for christmis des year.

Procedure

Explain how an event happened or happens.

Tip: Explain how an event happens - it is a *procedure* (e.g., I go to the store every day after school.)

> Little egg's hach in to
> tadpol's. The tadpol's groe
> back lag's. Thin they groe
> font lag's. The taol gits
> smolr Thairis yor frog.
>
> Did you know that a a pond
> at night there is a lif saicl.
> First the watre plants
> grow with sun, watre and
> soil. Then the bugs eat the
> watre plants. Nixct the
> frogs, todes and trdls eath
> the bugs. Las the rakcons
> eat's frogs and todes...

Explanation

Explain why an event happened or happens.

Tip: Is it a factual thing written in the past or present? If yes, does it:

Explain *why* an event happened or happens - It is an *explanation* (e.g., uses "because" and/or a statement/reason structure - "I went to the store because I was hungry." OR "I love dogs. They are fun to play with."

> I can not go at scheol
> because is halodays.
>
> I want a thomas bed
> because I want oun so bad
> for my birthday.

Description

Describe the attributes of a person or thing.

Tip: Is it a factual thing written in the present tense? If yes, does it:

Describe the specific attributes of a person or thing - it is a *description*
(e.g., My dog is black and white.)

> I have a dog named
> nutmeg. Nutmeg jumps on
> her fence a lot. My dog
> runs fast. My dog is specail
> to me. My dog wondreds
> aornd. My dog is a
> shatepnad. My dog is two
> years old. I love my dog.

> Alvin and the Chimpmuks
> They sing and dance

Report

Describe a group or category of things.

Tip: Describe a general group or category of things - it is a *report* (e.g., Dogs are carnivores.)

> Cats have four paws. Cats
> eat cat food. Some cats
> can be nice or mean.
> People buy cats. Cats are
> orange, brown, black,
> white. Cats drink milk...

> Penguins live in Alaska and
> they in live in the north
> Pole Penguins are black
> and wite and theylive in the
> water and they aso swim
> in the water

Opinion

Express an opinion about a thing or event.

Tip: Use of evaluative verbs and adjectives - "I like my dog." or "School is boring."

> I do not like school. I am
> glad we got 5 mor days in
> school. Onley I like part of
> the school.

> I like cat
> Cat are nice
> I want a cat

Poetry

Use carefully chosen words to create meaning or share emotion (May employ word order, connotation, imagery, figures of speech, sound, or rhythm.)

Tip: e.g., "One fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish.")

Pumpkins	Eagle
Orange, round	Big special
Carve, seeds, slimy	Fly glide attack
Light, glow	Good exciting wondering
Jack-O-Lantern	thankful
	Bird

Total Intelligible Words

Purpose of the measure:
To quantify the number of intelligible words produced by a beginning student writer.

The measurement tallies the total number of correctly and/or phoenetically spelled words in a written product. Intelligible words are defined as words *of at least two letters* that can be identified by two independent raters.

The average number of total intelligible words across multiple writing samples should be measured.

How to use the Total Intelligible Words measurement

- Two reviewers are ideal for this measure. Special qualifications are not needed.
- Reviewer 1: Review the student's writing sample - While reading, transcribe on a separate piece of paper (or in the "Word" field below) any words you can identify as intelligible. Take your best guess.
- Reviewer 2: Complete the same steps as reviewer 1.
- The total intelligible words is based on the intelligible words identified by *both* reviewers one and two.
- Average the number of intelligible words across multiple writing samples.

Unique Words

Purpose of the measure:
To quantify the number of unique words produced by a beginning student writer.

The measurement tallies the total number of different words in a student writing sample that follows conventional or phoenetic spelling.

The average number of unique words across multiple writing samples should be measured.

How to use the Unique Words measurement

- The number of different words is based on the number of intelligible words identified by reviewers 1 and 2.
- Using the list of total intelligible words in a student sample, count the number of unique (different) words within that writing sample.
- Average the number of unique words across multiple writing samples.