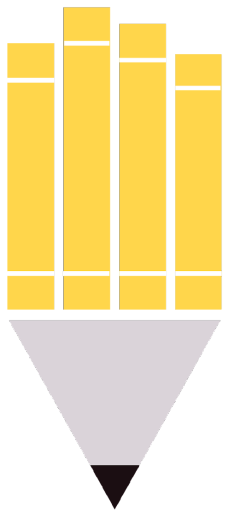


Volunteer Guide



story
studio

Inspire. Empower. Educate.

*"Thank you so much for running this amazing program. I've learned a lot and gotten a started on a project that will be with me for years to come."
- Raine, Summer Writing Studio Participant*

Who We Are

Story Studio Writing Society is a registered, non-profit organisation offering 'fun-first' writing workshops that inspire, educate and empower youth to be great storytellers. Our workshops boost creativity, improve relationships with literacy and help youth recognize literacy as a tool that they can enjoy and experience success with.

What We Do

Our workshop facilitators lead a variety of different creative writing workshops for learners both in and outside of the classroom. As a volunteer, you will join them, following their lead to provide learners with one-on-one help. We use interactive and tactile activities to introduce learners to the building blocks of writing in a fun and supportive way. All of our programs ensure kids learn through structured frameworks, but are open-ended in that the characters, ideas and words are their own. In some programs, we take learner stories and publish them as individual books or anthologies, to share and celebrate their work with the world!



Our Programs

Most Story Studio programs use very simple workbooks and our StorySheet resources to draw out stories in a structured way. Each step is reinforced through games and activities that Story Studio instructors draw out at different intervals. Read more about our StorySheet process, and each of our current programs, at www.storystudio.ca

YOUR ROLE IN THE CLASSROOM

As a volunteer, you will support an instructor who will lead the program. In general, your primary role will be to work one-on-one with kids to support the writing process. With older participants, you will act as a Story Coach, helping to motivate and support the young author as they work through their story. With younger participants, or those who struggle with writing, you will be both a Transcriber and Story Coach: working with the young author to get their ideas and words on the page.

As Transcribers

- Listen and write down the child's words. You may want to get them to tell you the story twice - first to get the general ideas out, then again so they can dictate it word by word to you.
- If the participant is uncertain about letting you act as a transcriber, you can tell them: *"You have great ideas. I'm a fast writer. Let's work together and get your ideas on paper."*
- If there is a word that you can't understand, ask for clarification. Explain that you want to make sure the typist gets it exactly as the learner wants it. (This is especially true with names, which can get lovely and weird.)
- The learner should be able to understand all of the words in their story. When you're reading it back to them and you notice a word that seems advanced for their age, ask them if they know the word. If they don't, replace it with a word that they choose.

As Writing Coaches

- Check in with the participant, and ask them to tell you their ideas, or ask to read their work. (They might be shy, so take the time to chat and get to know them.)
- Begin with genuine positive feedback. Is there a strong description, a unique word choice, an unusual character? An idea that is really cool?
- Ask about anything that doesn't make sense, needs clarification or could be strengthened with more detail.

Our most important goal is to give kids a positive experience with literacy.

Their story is tangible evidence of their success and we want them to be proud of it.

For this to happen, their story needs to...

...be their own

...be fun to create

...feel like an achievement



PROMPTS

As Transcribers and Story Coaches, we need to try to prompt learners rather than lead them. You're not the guide, they are. But it's your job to help them when they get stuck. One approach is to use prompts to nudge the young writer along. Good prompts are open-ended questions - but we want to avoid leading questions that will change *their* story into *your* story.

Good Prompts	Leading Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can you tell me about the forest?• What did he look like?• How did she feel? How did she show that she felt that way?• What does your character want?• What happened next?• Can you put that in a sentence for me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can you smell sweet flowers in the forest?• Is he tall with dark hair? I bet he has blue eyes!• Does she feel sad? Is she crying?• Does he go to the shop next to buy a new bike?

If you get no response from prompting, you can make the questions more specific - but keep them open-ended as possible.

- What does it smell like in the forest?
- How tall is he?
- Where did she go next?

As Transcribers

- Stop occasionally to read back what you've written, saying something like, "I'm going to read it back now. Please tell me if there's anything you'd like to change or add. Remember, this is your story so you get to decide."



As Writing Coaches

- The most powerful prompt of all is the simplest: "*And then what happens?*" Keep asking this, and the story will unfold.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF WRITERS

Different participants will require different levels of involvement. There is no cookie cutter way to work with a learner. That said, here are some strategies for working with common challenges facing young writers.

The I-Don't-Know Writer:

What if you encounter a learner who consistently responds with 'I don't know' or just a blank stare?

Step 1: Look back in their notes. Read out their ideas for the part of the story they're working on (character, setting or plot). Ask them which things they like best and try to get them to put these things into a sentence for you.

Step 2: Attempt to brainstorm with the learner. Remember, no writer works in a bubble; we all need inspiration and sounding boards. When you brainstorm, suggest that the writer come up with three possible ideas before you write any down. This takes the pressure off the learner to think of one perfect idea, and instead works with 'verbal rough drafts'.

If the learner gives you a one or two word answer but isn't able or willing to put it into a sentence for you, offer a few options. Try to keep the sentences simple. Have the learner say the sentence they want out loud to ensure they understand the words. If they say, 'What you just said', try, 'My memory isn't so good. What did I say?' or 'Which sentence?' as you may have offered a few.

If that doesn't work, write the sentence down and read it back to them. If you're not sure that the learner understands all of the words, ask. (For example, 'Do you know what courageous means?' Do you want to use a different word?')

The I-Want-Constant-Help Writer:

Sometimes learners want continuous help and you find yourself spending all of your time with just one kid. Remember – some kids need more help than others. At the same time, our goal is to give every learner in the room some one-on-one time with an adult, so you need to keep moving.

Step 1: Help the learner get to the next stage – for example, from the introduction to the problem or from the problem to the end of the first attempt to solve it.

Step 2: Tell the learner you need to help some of the other kids now and ask her to start working on the next part of the story or to work on a picture. If you feel like it's not working and she's still on your heels, ask another volunteer to have a try.

The I-Don't-Want-Any-Help Writer:

What if you encounter a learner who tells you they don't want or need any help at all?
What if the learner tells you to go away?

Step 1: Don't begin by asking a learner if they need help. Tell them you're here because you love to read stories written by young authors, and you'd love to read their story with them. Ask if it's okay to read the story out loud to yourself - some learners are self-conscious about hearing their own story.

Step 2: Be gentle. Begin by pointing out what you like about the story – positive feedback. If there are problems with the story, decide what is the most important thing to tackle. If there are parts that you don't understand, ask the child to explain the story to you. Repeat it to them and suggest any additions or changes that might make the story stronger. Remember - in the end, it is the learner's story and there's only so far we can push.

The Really-I'm-Not-Copying Writer:

What if you strongly suspect the learner is copying a character or storyline from a book, movie or game?

Step 1: Ask the learner if the idea is their own or, if not, what their inspiration is. Ask them what they like about the source material? What makes it cool? Remind the learner that we don't want to hear other people's stories - we want to hear *their* story.

Step 2: Help them to 'remix' the story to make it their own. Suggest combining two different sources to make a new, unique product. Ask the writer to make changes to their character so that it's not a direct copy of an existing character – the appearance, name, some of the traits or abilities. Once you alter the character, it's often easier for the learner to make changes to the setting and plot.

Step 3: Be open to the learner's desire to play with existing stories. We don't want to encourage plagiarism, but we do want to encourage creativity - and sometimes this involves 'fan fiction'.

The Gruesome-and-Violent Writer:

What if your writer is telling a story that's filled with gore and violence?

Step 1: Check in with the Story Studio instructor and classroom teacher/group leader. Different environments have different standards, and it's important to work within the boundaries set within the classroom or program. Writing can also be a cathartic experience that carries emotional weight for the young writer, and making sure they are supported by their teacher/group leader is important.

Step 2: In general, we encourage young writers to avoid excessive gore/violence and instead focus on suspense. A useful question to ask is, "If your story is published, how would you feel about a grandparent/younger sibling reading it?"

YOUR ROLE AS AN EDITOR

Our biggest goal is to ensure that the story remains in the author's voice. We stress to learners that they do not need to worry about spelling, grammar or punctuation and so, as editors, these are our priorities. We want the writers to be proud of their stories and to still recognise it as their own work. Essentially, we are proofreading more than actually editing.

These guidelines are not meant to overwhelm you. Our main goal is to maintain the author's voice but, if you're comfortable with it, please feel free to follow the more specific tips below. As editors, our aim is to get the text into a printable form that follows consistent house style.

What to Change

- Correct all typos and spelling mistakes.
- Correct all punctuation, including quotation marks, commas, and periods.
- Add paragraph breaks.
- Break up run-on sentences.
- Maintain consistent perspective (first or third person). If the story switches, stick with what the author used in the first instance.
- Maintain consistent tense. In most instances, we use past tense. Again, stick with what the author used in the first instance.
- Remove excessive use of the word then or and. For example:
Then I ran across the street. Then I threw my arms around my pet kangaroo. Then I took him home. Then I fed him alfalfa sprouts.
This can be changed to: *I ran across the street. I threw my arms around my pet kangaroo. Then I took him home and fed him alfalfa sprouts.*
- Feel free to insert optional relative pronouns if they are required, or it improves the sentence. For example: He went to the store, only to realize that he didn't have any money!

What Not to Change

- Do not change sentences beginning with 'and' or 'but' unless it should obviously be joined to another sentence. We allow the kids some creative license with this.
- Do not change the spelling of character's names. Many learners are very particular and have intentionally chosen a particular spelling.
- Do not move sentences or paragraphs around because it will read or sound better.
- Avoid the use of semicolons as most kids do not use them in their writing. Instead create two sentences or use a conjunction
- Do not join sentences together unless it's otherwise difficult to read or grammatically incorrect. For example, this does not need to be changed: *He was as tall as a tree. His hair was moose-brown. He loved to jump. He had giant toes.* This does need changes: *He was as tall as a tree. Moose-brown hair. Loves jumping. Giant toes.*

Story Studio House Editing Style

- Spell out numbers up to one thousand: *four* instead of 4.
- Use Canadian spellings: colour, neighbour, metre, ax, favourite, flavour, moustache.
- Spell out the word 'okay', instead of using the abbreviation OK.
- Spell out the word 'yeah' instead of yea, ya or yah.
- Italicize characters' thoughts:
 - Danny wondered to himself, '*Is the sky really blue?*'
 - '*I knew it!*' I thought.
- Leave one line of space between regular paragraphs and dialogue, but do not indent the dialogue. Each time a different character speaks, marks the start of a new paragraph.
- Please capitalize the beginning of the dialogue in quotation marks. Also include the punctuation inside the quotation marks
 - "Hi everyone!"
 - "Hey," she said.
- Ellipses are consistently three dots: So, like this... Then a space before the next sentence.
- Unless quoted in dialogue please use 'anyway' rather than 'anyways'

Volunteer Agreement

In accepting this volunteer position, you agree to the following duties and commitments:

Inclusion. As a volunteer, I am committed to encouraging youth in their creative expression, personal growth, and academic success. I understand that Story Studio recognizes the importance of diversity at all levels and in all aspects of our work. I agree to follow Story Studio policies, procedures and rules, treating all organization members, volunteers and participants with respect.

Confidential Information. I understand that, while volunteering, I may obtain nonpublic information about Story Studio, or its partners, volunteers, and participants ("Confidential Information"). To the extent allowed by law, I agree that I will hold Story Studio's Confidential Information in the strictest confidence. I will maintain confidentiality of participant work, name, school or other identifying information. I will not share photographs of any learners on social media or a personal blog, or with those outside of the organization, without the permission of Story Studio staff.

Learner Safety. I understand that, as a volunteer, I may not exchange contact information with participants at any time, provide transportation to any participants, or purchase anything for participants without permission from Story Studio staff. I understand that if a learner says, writes, or suggests that they have been hurt, want to hurt someone else, or want to hurt themselves, I am mandated to report this to program staff.

Training Acknowledgement. I will participate in any induction, training, support and/or feedback opportunities. I understand that I have made a commitment to complete assigned tasks in the time frame provided. I agree to give us as much notice as possible when unable to make previously arranged volunteer commitments. As an in-program volunteer, I have received the 'Story Studio Volunteer Manual.' I will familiarize myself with the material in the manual and understand that I am governed by its contents. As an online editor volunteer, I have received the 'Story Studio Editors Guide' and agree to familiarize myself with the material and follow Story Studio practices.

Responsibility. I understand that I have made a commitment to complete assigned tasks in the time frame provided. I agree to give us as much notice as possible when unable to make previously arranged volunteer commitments. I further understand and agree that the volunteer relationship is at will and based on the mutual consent of each volunteer and Story Studio. Both parties reserve the right to end this agreement at any time by giving notice to the other party that it will not continue.

By signing below, I express my understanding and intent to enter into this relationship with Story Studio willingly and voluntarily with no expectation of compensation.

Signature

Date