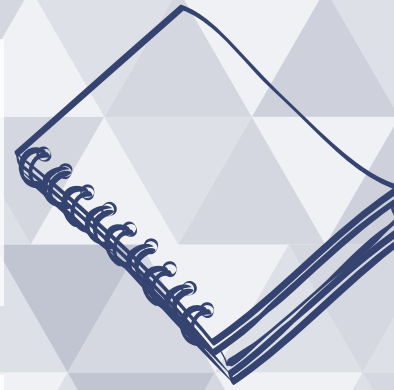


NOTEBOOKS: WHY?

Writing begins not as desk work but as lifework:

"I don't sit down to write, my writing starts with catching glimpses and snatches. It is a way of living." Karla Kuskin

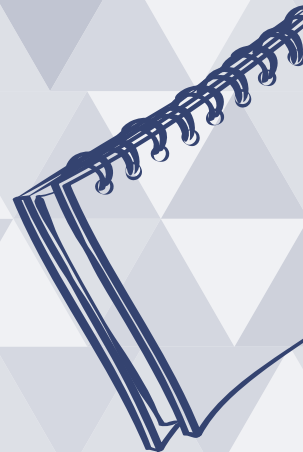


Notebooks help children to grow meaning not just content - connection to self and finding significance in the everyday events of our own lives is key.

When we begin writing by collecting bits-and-pieces in notebooks, we are more likely to experience writing as a process of growing **meaning**.

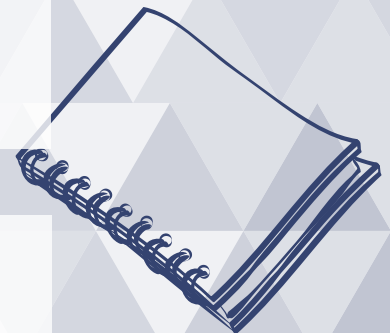
A notebook is:

- A place for rehearsal.
- A seedbed out of which rough drafts grow.
- A valued tool in childrens' **lives**.



Motivation for writing:

- Notebooks create a reservoir of ideas and inspiration to draw on when writing.
- If motivating children takes all of our time and attention, then our hands are already full.
- When strategies for our children to rehearse for writing are humming, they become deeply involved in writing, they don't need motivating activities.
- "By supplying a topic from **my** experience and giving it to my children, I indirectly taught them that their lives weren't worth writing about, that they don't have their own cherished life, their own moments." Lucy Calkins



NOTEBOOKS: WHAT?

1: **Wonderings** - We need to wonder and share **our** wonderings. Some wonderings may just be recorded in the notebook, others could be 'grown' into pieces and crafted into a variety of forms (often non-fiction pieces).

Pennie Brownlee reminds us that all our children have to do is hear the bigger people in their lives expressing their wonderings, using rich language in context to describe their experience, and their download begins.

"I wonder when the eye-stalks will reappear? (They're the top pair.)

His smelling tentacles are starting to protrude. (They are the lower pair.)

Imagine having retractable eyes!

Let's follow his iridescent trail; he's a long way from anything to eat here.

This one's all tucked into his spiral home, he's protected from the sun." **Pennie**

Brownlee - Magic Places

2: **Observations and capturing moments** - We can lead children to notice and to record exactly what they see, hear, feel, and smell with a few simple questions.

*"This child's notes from **observing a spider's web** became a simple description, a factual recount of what was observed with some very deliberate use of literary devices, such as repetition to enhance the telling.*

Initial notebook entry (before crafting):

"Silver thread

It grew into a masterpiece.

Dripping with crystal jewels.

Repairing a rip.

Sticky strips.

Catching his prey.

Thin piece of silver string.

Wavy patterns.

Cotton.

Patterns waving all about."

Extract from I've got something to say by Gail Loane

NOTEBOOKS: WHAT?

3: **Memories triggered by conversation** - This will often happen while children hear others telling their stories. Children will link to the anecdote and make a jotting for future use. E.g. "That reminds me of the time I got an electric shock from a fence and linking it so much I went back for another."

4: **Bits of writing you like** - Invite children to have their notebooks on hand when you, or they, are reading. Be ready to 'steal' effective words, phrases or ideas - these can come in handy when children write later. E.g. 'The trees held the coolness under a green umbrella of leaves' or 'The thorns snatched at him' *from 'A taste of Blackberries' by Doris Buchanan Smith*

5: **Gathering snippets of our lives** - Perhaps use photographs or objects to provoke connections to memories and stories. These can lead to rich conversation and possibilities for writing in a variety of ways. E.g. A security blanket; a 'treasured' collection of stones; or perhaps a well-loved toy.

6: **Selecting ideas & finding significance** - Supporting our children to find what is significant or meaningful to them within an event, moment or experience (so we don't get everything.) We can ask "What stands out or stays with you from the day, event?" This could be a moment in time, a smell, a disappointment etc.

Encourage children to draw a timeline of their chosen event and invite them to pick a point along it which represents the significant part of it, the bit that made an impression. This supports children to move away from recounting everything from 'I woke up to I went to bed' (bed to bed stories).



NOTEBOOKS: HOW?

Lead wide awake lives:

"Very young children are the best writers in the world – except for the writing part of being a writer. They live in constant **awe** and **wonder**." Lucy Calkins. We teach children that this curiosity, this awe and wonder with what they see and collect will enrich their writing.

Adults as role models:

- If we understand the role of the notebook in the big picture of genuine authorship, we can lead children to share this understanding. Notebooks are then more likely to become a part of their lives.
- The best way to develop the wide awakesness, is to model 'noticing' details and perhaps even adding them to your own notebook.

Children need to be shown how to make meaningful entries:

- We can demonstrate authorly behaviour – how we capture ideas and snippets when they strike, at **any** time of the day.
- We can plan time to show children **how** to make writing meaningful entries, until the behaviour is learned and routines are established.
- By modelling ourselves as learner-writers, we build trust with our children, and we become a community of writers. We take the same risks we are asking our children to take.

Routine:

- We can demonstrate how an author works: *"Sophie, your story reminded me of something very similar when I was getting ready for school the other day. I had forgotten that. Thank you. I might use that in my writing later."*
- Each day, we could begin by sharing the noticings, memories, words, and ideas children have collected in notebooks since you last checked in.
- We need to act as if writing is the most important thing in the world to our children. We refer to them as authors, because we want our children to be members of what Gail Loane refers to as the '**team of writers**'.
- Let's cherish their successes, and make a fuss over entries made independently.