

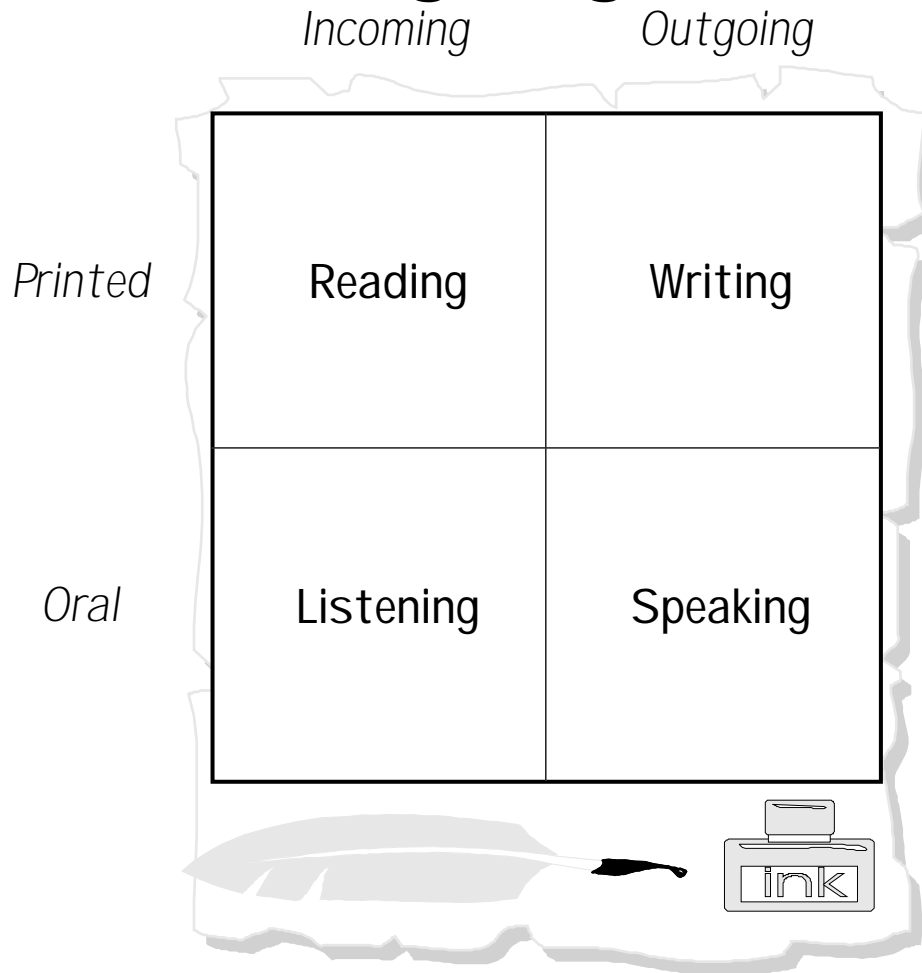
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Section 1

The Language Arts



The four language arts do not exist in isolation. They are on a continuum. First, there are the two language arts that concern themselves with getting a message and decoding it. They are the incoming language arts, speaking and reading. Then, there are the two language arts that concern themselves with transmitting a message that others can interpret. They are the outgoing language arts, speaking and writing. Why include this basic information? Because it contains the answer to some key questions.

Why do so many kids have trouble with the idea of writing? Think about the family structure. In today's busy world, family time is shrinking. When we are scurrying about, there is less time for discussion. Less discussion means that kids have less opportunity to produce outgoing language (in the oral form). Also, think about the increased class sizes and packed standards manuals. In the classroom we have less and less time for kids to develop ideas in spoken discourse.

How can this information help? Tell parents to **talk** with their children. Talk about a specific topic. Retell the events of a day. Explain why they liked or disliked a particular event or occasion. Structuring language for an oral outgoing message requires similar thought processes to the writing exercise. When you share a story, movie or television program, discuss it. This is the most natural way to reinforce the comprehension skills that are a part of the reading program.

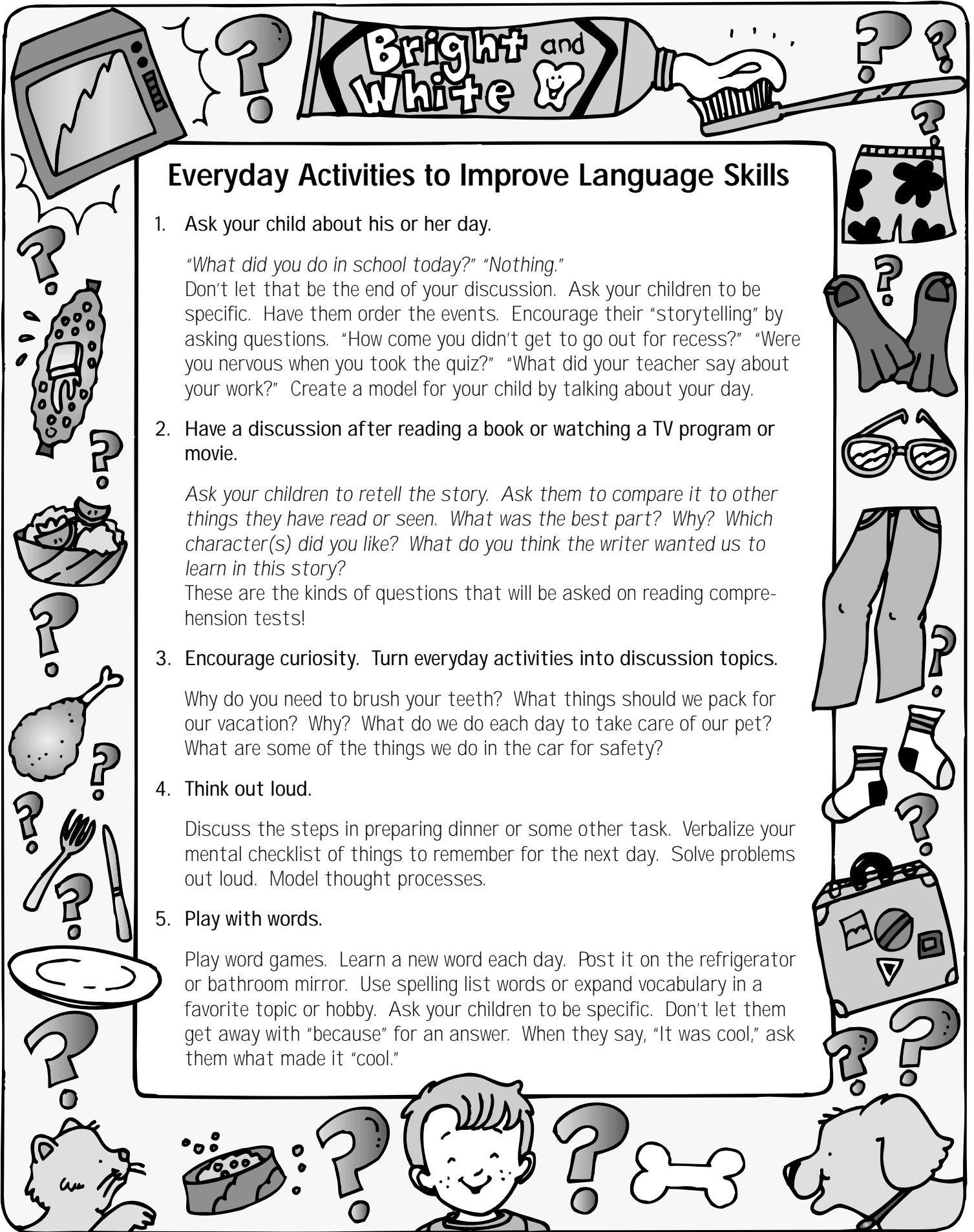
What about classroom applications? Sometimes kids need to see the big picture. Show students the way that the language arts fit together. We need to remove the aura of mystery from the act of writing. Showing kids that “talking on paper” is all that writing really is can remove the barriers for many kids. As educators it is also important for us to understand that the four language arts affect one another. The writing that students do affects the reading they will choose. Language they hear comes out in the writing. Effective instruction in the language arts takes place when one form supports another. Many of our young students learn to read because they write; many write well because they read; etc.

Understanding and employing the basic ideas of language learning is important for all teachers and parents, too.

As we . . .	It helps us to . . .
Listen	Speak
Speak	Write
Write	Read
Read	Listen
Write	Speak
Listen	Write
Read	Speak
Read	Write

The reproducible, “After the Story” (page 10) is a guide for families to discuss a story they have shared together, whether it was a book, movie or TV sitcom. Getting kids to discuss the story deepens comprehension.

The “Talk About It!” sheet (page 9) can be reproduced and filled in with a short description of a class activity. Send this home with students, maybe on Fridays, and ask parents to talk with their children about all the wonderful things they did in school. This reinforces language production, and it also keeps parents in touch with classroom activities.



Everyday Activities to Improve Language Skills

1. Ask your child about his or her day.

"What did you do in school today?" "Nothing."

Don't let that be the end of your discussion. Ask your children to be specific. Have them order the events. Encourage their "storytelling" by asking questions. "How come you didn't get to go out for recess?" "Were you nervous when you took the quiz?" "What did your teacher say about your work?" Create a model for your child by talking about your day.

2. Have a discussion after reading a book or watching a TV program or movie.

Ask your children to retell the story. Ask them to compare it to other things they have read or seen. What was the best part? Why? Which character(s) did you like? What do you think the writer wanted us to learn in this story?

These are the kinds of questions that will be asked on reading comprehension tests!

3. Encourage curiosity. Turn everyday activities into discussion topics.

Why do you need to brush your teeth? What things should we pack for our vacation? Why? What do we do each day to take care of our pet? What are some of the things we do in the car for safety?

4. Think out loud.

Discuss the steps in preparing dinner or some other task. Verbalize your mental checklist of things to remember for the next day. Solve problems out loud. Model thought processes.

5. Play with words.

Play word games. Learn a new word each day. Post it on the refrigerator or bathroom mirror. Use spelling list words or expand vocabulary in a favorite topic or hobby. Ask your children to be specific. Don't let them get away with "because" for an answer. When they say, "It was cool," ask them what made it "cool."