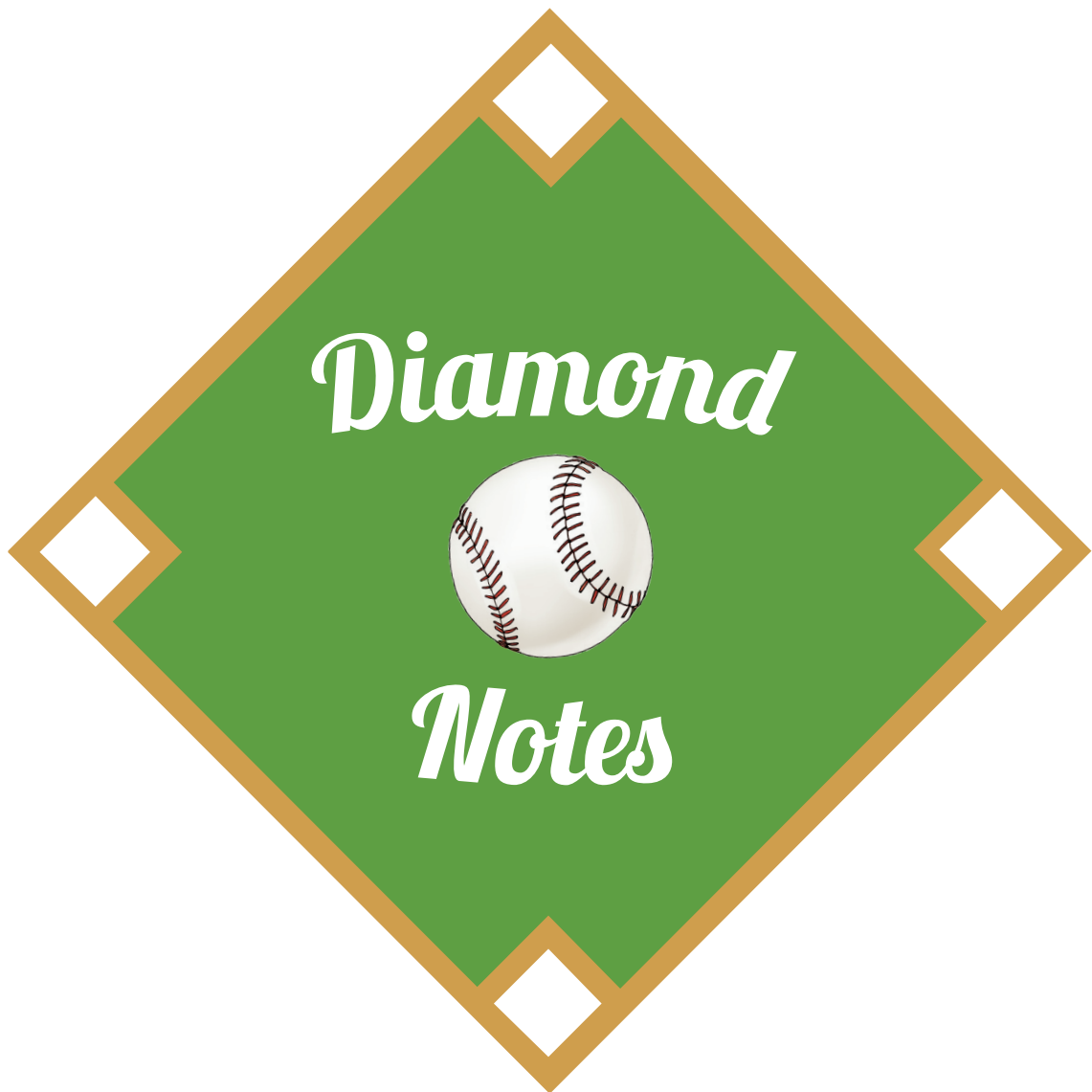


Creative Writing





Supplies

Here's what you'll need to play ball:

1. One folder to hold your children's work.
2. At least 20 copies of Diamond A (page 31) and at least 11 copies of Diamond B* (page 33) per child, OR blank paper to create your own diamonds.
3. Drawing supplies: pencils, colored pencils, crayons, etc.
4. Lined paper for writing.
5. Paste.
6. Scissors (to cut out pictures on page 37) (optional).
7. Magazines to cut out pictures (optional).
8. Make copies of Evaluation Form (page 35) (use at your discretion).



***Note to Mom or Dad:** The Appendix has enough copies to last through Unit 5, including practice assignments scheduled in between units. Should you need more, permission is hereby granted *to the original purchaser only* to reproduce as many copies of items found in the Reproducible Section of this Appendix as necessary *for his or her immediate family's use*.

Introduction



Remember when you learned to swim? It was a bright, beautiful July day. The air was warm, the water looked so inviting. Your dad had your hand tightly gripped in his. The two of you carefully approached the side of the pool. He let your hand go so you could peer over the edge, butterflies in your stomach. Then Dad shoved you into the deep end with a joyful shout of “Go forth and swim!”

OK, we hope that wasn’t really how you learned to swim. But guess what? That is essentially how many kids today learn to write. They are never taught a practical, step-by-step approach to writing. Instead, they are just expected to sit down with a piece of paper and a pencil and write with little or no guidance.

When asked to “write about your summer vacation,” many kids don’t know what to say or how to get started. They get extremely frustrated extremely quickly. Without direct instruction, kids simply have a hard time expressing in writing what they know, think, and feel. That’s why we developed this creative writing program. Think of it as swim lessons for young writers!

Writing Talent vs. Writing Skill

There are two dimensions to every writer: talent and skill. A few people have a natural talent for writing. Whenever they sit down to write, beautiful words flow freely. Unfortunately, you can’t teach writing talent. Writing skill, however, is completely different. All children can—and must!—learn the skill of writing so they can effectively communicate on paper.

Diamond Notes focuses on improving your children’s writing skill. We can not guarantee they will become the next Shakespeare, but we do believe that after using this course they will be able to clearly express themselves in well-written para-

graphs, whether or not they have a natural talent for writing. And for children who are naturally talented, this course will help them organize and channel their expressions even more clearly.

Introducing Diamond Notes

The Diamond Notes method breaks down the writing process into fundamental, easily-understood steps that teach students how to gather and organize their thoughts. Just as any coach teaches team members to practice a regular set of moves—like a throw to home plate in baseball—so Diamond Notes encourages students to practice its predefined steps. With Diamond Notes, comments like “But what do I do?” or “How do I start?” will be a thing of the past.

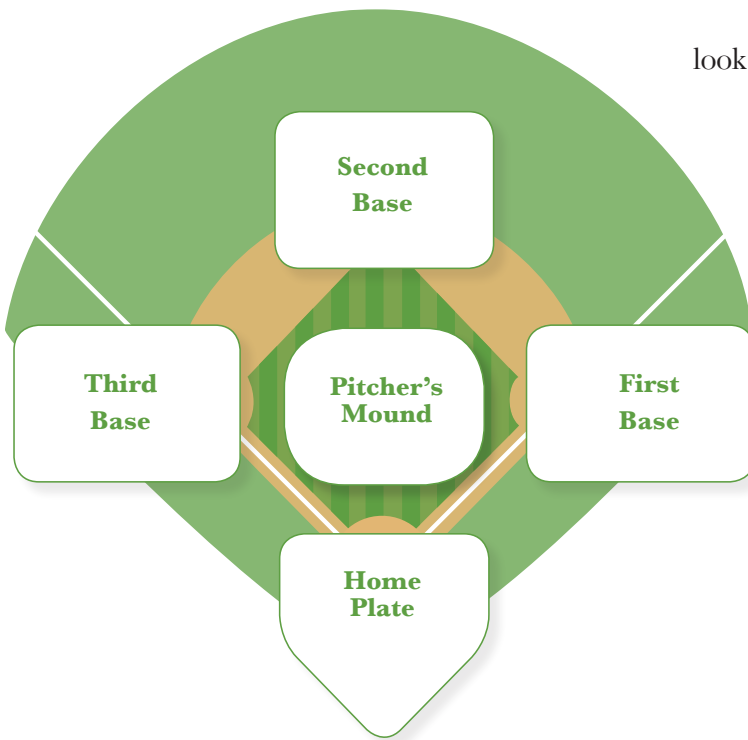
Diamond Notes will teach your children rudimentary outlining skills as they begin to write basic expository paragraphs. It works because it effectively trains them to organize their thoughts and plan out their writing so they can express what they have to say in a clear, understandable manner. After your children learn the thought processes behind the Diamond Notes method, they will be able to apply the method to any type of writing they may encounter.

Note to Mom and Dad: You will find many examples along the way to help you teach the Diamond Notes method to your children. Please be aware, though, that some of these examples may seem more advanced than what your children are able to create. That’s OK, because the examples are intended primarily to help you understand how the method works and how to explain it to your children. So please don’t use our examples as a yardstick to see how your children’s attempts are measuring up! If you want to gauge how they’re doing, use the Evaluation Form in the Reproducibles Section.



Introduction continued

To see how the Diamond Notes work take a look at this picture.



All the action starts on the Pitcher's Mound, just like in baseball. The "Pitcher's Mound" represents the subject of the piece—what will later turn into the topic sentence. Once your children know the subject, they should "load the bases." **First Base** should be the **first event** or the **most important point** related to the subject. **Second Base** is the **second event** or **second most important point** and **Third Base** is the **third event** or **third most important point**. Finally, **Home Plate** will be the **conclusion to their** paragraph. When the bases are loaded, they're done!

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Learning the Method

The Diamond Notes method starts with simple tasks, and then builds in complexity with each assignment. Here is a unit-by-unit look at what

your children will be taught:

Since most young children are more comfortable drawing pictures than writing words, the first three lessons feature a simple, non-threatening introduction to the method. In the first lesson in **Unit 1**, your children will draw pictures on the diamond. In the second lesson, they will use picture cards to show they understand which items fit in a certain category. This sets the foundation for writing clear, focused paragraphs later, since only items that fit together belong on a diamond or in a paragraph.

(Note to Mom or Dad: If your children are bored using pictures, feel free to have them go

Unit 1: Categorizing Ideas

Students learn how to:

- ✓ use the basics of the Diamond Notes method
- ✓ categorize and group items together
- ✓ determine what things belong on a diamond and what do not



Unit 2: Ranking Ideas

Students learn how to:

- ✓ rank items in order of importance
- ✓ evaluate and decide which items have the most value
- ✓ develop ideas and sequence them

ahead and use words from the start!

The first lesson in **Unit 2** teaches how to rank ideas in order of importance. The next lesson transitions from using pictures to writing words. This progression helps students begin to organize their thoughts and ideas and put words



Unit 3: Phrases & Sentences

Students learn how to:

- ✓ present their thoughts in an organized manner
- ✓ use the diamond with phrases in addition to single words
- ✓ write three statements or reasons to back up a main point
- ✓ display emotion in writing
- ✓ write a conclusion sentence

together in a logical manner.

The first lesson in **Unit 3** teaches how to write a concluding sentence that shows emotion. Later in the unit, students will practice using the diamond to respond to a phrase. This lesson will challenge them to use higher-level thinking because they are now developing logical statements to defend a perspective instead of just listing items that fit a category. When they master this skill, they will be able to express their opinions by organizing and



Unit 4: Ideas into Sentences

Students learn how to:

- ✓ move thoughts from the diamond onto paper
- ✓ write a complete paragraph

presenting their thoughts in a coherent manner.

The first lesson in **Unit 4** teaches how to transfer thoughts from the diamond to paper and write complete sentences that fit the topic. In the next lesson, students will put those sentences to-



Introduction continued

Unit 5: Completing the Paragraph

Students learn how to:

- ✓ add details to a paragraph

gether to form a complete paragraph.

Unit 5 teaches students how to add significant, interesting details to improve a paragraph. By the end of this unit, they will have written a strong paragraph, complete with a topic sentence, three main points, and interesting details.

See for Yourself

To monitor your children's progress, try this: Before the year starts, have them write about their best friend without giving them any additional instruction. Keep their work, and ask them to do this same assignment again after completing the Diamond Notes course. The improvement in just a few weeks should amaze you!

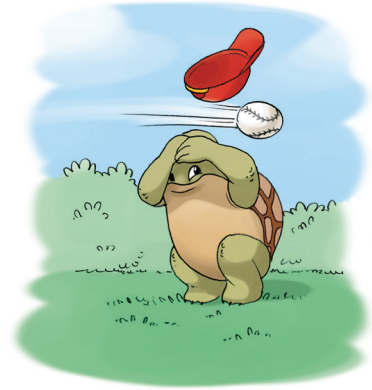
As you progress through this program, keep all of the work that your children create in a folder. You will re-use some of their work in later assignments, and this folder will also help you to see how much your children improve.

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Topics list:

Here is a list of the specific topics we use for each assignment. If a topic does not interest your children, feel free to pick a different one that sparks their imagination. Just make sure that the topic you choose provides the same structural answer and isn't already used later in the process.



Unit 1 (pp. 8–9)

- Sports
- Tools
- Shapes
- Clothes
- Weather
- Animals
- Food

Unit 2 (pp. 10–11)

- Favorite Colors
- Favorite Foods
- Favorite Toys
- Favorite Ice Cream Flavors
- Favorite Subjects
- Favorite Snacks

Unit 3 (pp. 12–15)

- Favorite Drinks
- Favorite Pets
- Favorite Books/Favorite Movies
- I Love Winter
- My Mom Is Great
- Homeschooling Is Fun

Unit 4 (pp. 16–19)

- I Love Winter; My Mom Is Great; Homeschooling Is Fun (continued from previous unit)
- I Wish I Could Go To ...
- (and topics continued from previous lesson)

Unit 5 (pp. 20–23)

- (all topics continued from previous unit)



Unit One

Lesson 1: Using Pictures to Group Items

Materials list:

- 3 copies of **Diamond A** (page 31)
- **Drawing supplies**
- **Pictures from magazines (optional)**
- **Paste (optional)**

“But Mom! I don’t know what to write.” You may recognize this as the signature call of frustrated children everywhere. If they’re sincere (and not just trying to get out of homework!), there’s probably some truth to their cry. Without some guidance, most children don’t know how to organize the many thoughts floating around their minds.

That’s why the Diamond Notes method starts here. The goal of Lesson 1 is to teach your children how to “load the bases” with items related to a topic (represented by the Pitcher’s Mound). They can draw pictures directly on the diamond’s bases or cut out pictures from magazines instead.

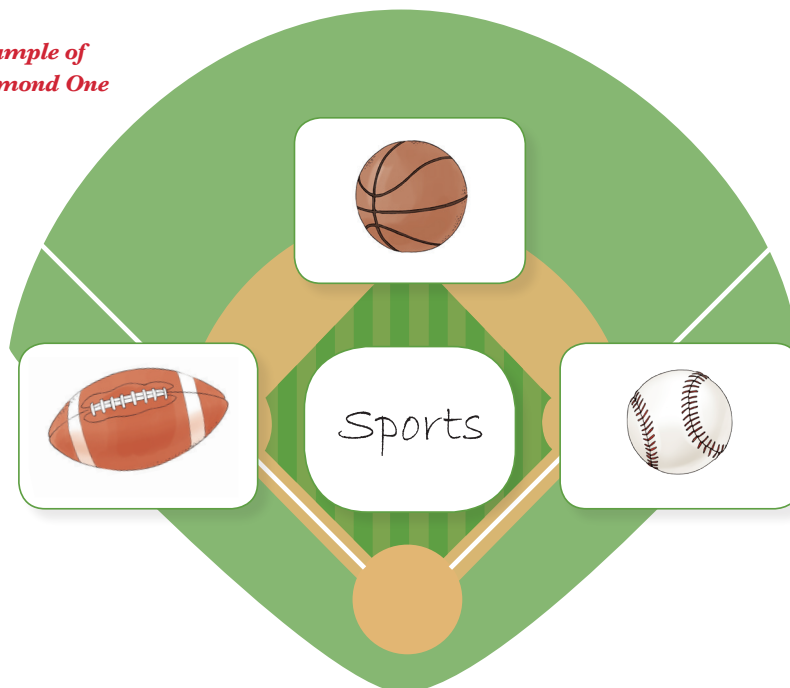
Don’t worry about the order of items right now. Your children should just concentrate on grouping items together appropriately. We will play favorites and rank items in Unit 2.

Once you have gathered the materials you need, use the following instructions to guide your children through the assignment.

Diamond One

The first diamond will be about sports, so have your children write “**Sports**” on the pitcher’s mound. Now, ask them about what sports they like. When they’ve chosen three sports, ask them to draw pictures that represent those sports on the three bases. For example, they could draw a baseball on first base, a basketball on second base, and a football on third base. Of course they don’t have to use those sports. As long as they have pictures that represent their chosen three sports on the bases and “Sports” on the pitcher’s mound, they’ve done this diamond correctly!

*Sample of
Diamond One*





Diamond Two

When they're done with the first diamond, move on to the second diamond, which will be about tools. Ask them to think of three tools and have them write the word **"Tools"** on the pitcher's mound. Then have them draw pictures of the tools on the bases. Since the pitcher's mound has the word "Tools" on it, all the bases should have pictures of tools on them.

Diamond Three

For the third diamond, ask your children to write **"Shapes"** on the pitcher's mound and think of three shapes. Have them look at the diamond itself if they need some help thinking of shapes! Then ask them to draw or paste pictures of those shapes on the bases.

Once they've finished their third diamond, that's all for the day. Good job!



Lesson 2: Pictures That Fit

Materials list:

- 4 copies of **Diamond A** (page 31)
- **Cut-out sheet** (page 37)
- **Scissors**
- **Paste**

In Lesson 2, you will challenge your children's understanding of the grouping process. Do they understand the concept of which items belong on a diamond and which do not?

Diamond One

The first diamond is going to be about clothes. Have your children write **"Clothes"** on the pitcher's mound of a new diamond. Then give them five picture cards, three that fit the category and two that do not. (See page 31 for cut-outs.) Ask them to place the correct cards on the bases. If they start to paste a card that doesn't belong, remind them of the topic to encourage them to choose the right cards. When they finish this diamond, congratulate them and reinforce that all the pictures fit because they are all kinds of clothes.

Diamonds Two Through Four

If the first diamond was difficult for your children, do the second diamond (**"Weather"**) the same way. If the second diamond still proves difficult, do the third (**"Animals"**) and fourth (**"Food"**) diamonds the same way.

For more of a challenge, have them do the remaining diamonds with all of the remaining picture cards. Ask them to paste the cards where they belong and tell them that some of the cards will not fit on any of the diamonds.

If you want to really challenge your children, don't tell them what topics should be on the pitcher's mounds and see if they can figure out the categories on their own.

Once they've finished all four diamonds, that's all for the day. Good job!