



*"Keep calm and just do it!"*

The New Year is often a time for reflection. What has gone well the past year? What changes do we want to make in the coming 12 months? In order to be successful, people look for ideas, programs, or products to help achieve their goal. Whether we decide to lose weight, gain muscle, learn to play the piano, or take up a new craft, people search for the best tools. Hours can be spent reading product reviews, searching through social media posts, and comparing cost vs. benefits. However, the U.S. News and World Report states that 80% of people give up on their resolutions by February 7th. Healthy food habits are given up, gym memberships are ignored, and craft projects are sitting neglected on a shelf. What a discouraging number.

Along with personal resolutions, teachers frequently make resolutions to improve their classrooms. These can be in any area—from curriculum to behavior management. What tips can we follow to make sure that our ideas to better our classroom are still flourishing in February and beyond?

Here are nine tips to make your resolutions successful! (Taken from <https://psychcentral.com/lib/10-sure-ways-to-keep-your-new-years-resolutions/>)

1. *Keep the resolution simple. Choose one change you would like to implement in your classroom and focus on that change. Don't try to change too much at once, or you risk frustrating your students and yourself.*
2. *Choose carefully. Be sure that the change you focus upon will be the most beneficial to you and your students.*
3. *Be realistic. You may not be able to grade every paper by the end of every school day, but you can resolve to keep your Sunday's free for whatever you want to do!*
4. *Break your goal into small pieces. The more planning you do to achieve your goal, the more successful you will be!*
5. *Make a timeline. What will implementation in your classroom look like? When will you evaluate your progress and success?*
6. *Take notes. Keep track of where you started and how you are progressing. If your goal is to start your classroom with a morning meeting, keep a calendar indicating every time you hold a morning meeting.*
7. *Treat yourself and your students. Acknowledge and celebrate your classroom successes. A goal may be for students to edit their work prior to turning it in. Celebrate students' successes with the class.*
8. *Look for support. Share your goal with a colleague and ask them to support you in this change.*
9. *Don't give up. Expect a setback. Acknowledge the slip and keep going!*

## Making Good Even Better

Revision is an important skill for students to learn and practice. While editing is making writing correct, revision makes writing more interesting. Word choice and sentence fluency are both parts of revising sentences.

Revision can be mastered by any student, resulting in improving both their writing and their view of themselves as a writer. In order for students to be successful, they require both direct instruction and practice. One way to provide both these things is to revise sentences based on a topic.

### Primary Students

Most primary students love animals. Choose a habitat with which students are familiar. Make a chart similar to the one below. The first column lists an animal found in that habitat, and the second column provides an action word (verb) the animal might do in that habitat.

Topic = Meadow

Animal	Action
* Deer	* Grazes
* Squirrel	* Climbs
* Robin	* Chirps
* Bee	* Gathers



Using the animal and its action, create a basic sentence.

The squirrel climbs.

Add a **where** to the sentence.

The squirrel climbs **on the branch**.

Add a **when** to the sentence. Put this at the beginning of the sentence.

**Early in the morning**, the squirrel climbs **on the branch**.

As students revise their original sentences, have them share both the original sentence and the new expanded sentence. Continue practicing this revision skill, adding a **Why** and **How** to sentences.

## Making Good Even Better, continued

Provide students many practice opportunities. Some students may need to simply add one item (when, where, why or how) to a sentence, while other students may be ready to experiment adding more revision to a sentence.

Publishing writing provides students a reason to now edit their writing for capitalization, punctuation, spelling and handwriting. The meadow animal writing provides an opportunity for students to publish their writing. Each student could select the animal writing they find most interesting and edit their new revised sentence. Student writing could be combined into a class book. Another option would be for every student to edit their meadow animal writing and combine those pages into a book for each student.

### Intermediate Students

Telling students to add more details or choose more interesting words in their writing is not effective for all students. Intermediate students require specific instruction and practice in revising sentences.

Practicing revising sentences on a theme provides students practice. Think of a situation which is common to all students, such as the cafeteria. Begin with a basic sentence.



Food is on the cafeteria floor.

An interesting **verb** improves the sentence.

Food **covers** the cafeteria floor.

Choose a noun. Put an **adjective** in front of that noun.

**Uneaten** food **covers** the cafeteria floor.

Add a **when** to the sentence. This may go at the beginning or end of the sentence.

**At the end of lunch,** **uneaten** food **covers** the cafeteria floor.

Put a **How in** the sentence. These words are also called adverbs.

**At the end of lunch,** **uneaten** food **completely covers** the cafeteria floor.

Repeat the process with other sentences describing the cafeteria. Students may add a where, why, or gerund as they revise their sentences. Students may also work in groups revising a basic sentence. One student adds an adjective, another changes the verb, while the third student adds a when or where.

## Poetry Corner

The following poems all focus on animals—a student favorite.

### ***“The Frog” by Hilaire Belloc***

This poem reminds the reader that name-calling hurts everyone’s feelings—even a frog. Students will empathize with the frog and understand his hurt feelings. The word “epithet” is a great addition to students’ vocabulary.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46688/the-frog-56d226a6b378b>

### ***“A Worm in My Pocket” by Jodee Saman***

Yuck! While I would not want a worm in my pocket, this poem will resonate with many students. When the author’s mother says the worm cannot live inside, the author responds with an emotion many students will understand. Ask students who they imagine is the author of the poem. Is the author a boy or girl? What is their age?

<https://genius.com/Jodee-samano-a-worm-in-my-pocket-annotated>



### ***Animal Poems by Ken Nisbett***

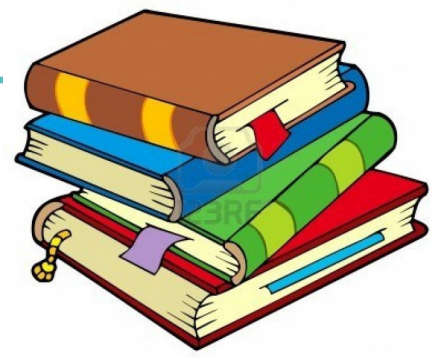
This website contains a collection of animal poems by Ken Nisbett. Please note there is a section at the end of each poem where teacher’s can request permission to use the poems in classrooms.

One particular favorite is “My Dog Likes to Dig.” The poem will quickly grab students’ attention and is wonderful for teaching rhyming patterns.

Another favorite is “Don’t Think About A Zebra.” Introduce the poem by asking students to not think about any particular topic. Discuss how impossible it is to complete this task. The poem is also a good tool for teaching adjectives.

<https://www.poetry4kids.com/topic/animals/>

## Book Nook



### Shouting at the Rain by Lynda Mulalley Hunt.

Written by the author of Fish in a Tree and One for the Murphys, this novel tells a story of family and friendship. Delsie has always lived with her Grammy on Cape Cod, loving to run barefoot, building shell creatures and studying the weather. Her life changes one summer as she begins to yearn for a "regular family." This gentle story of friendship and family will capture teachers' and students' hearts.

[https://www.amazon.com/Shouting-Rain-Lynda-Mullaly-Hunt/dp/0399175156/ref=tmm\\_hrd\\_swatch\\_0?\\_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Shouting-Rain-Lynda-Mullaly-Hunt/dp/0399175156/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)

### The Bridge Home by Padma Venkatraman

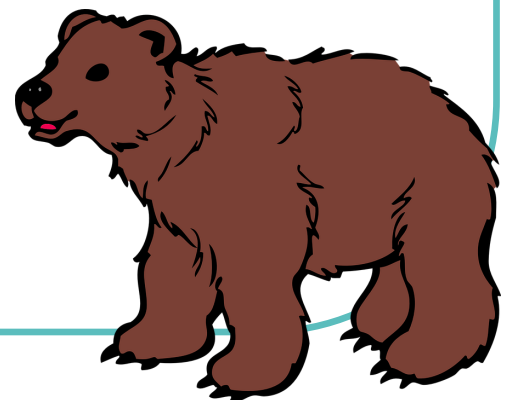
This book for middle grade students tells the story of four children who must learn to survive on the streets of Chennai, India. Two sister, Viji and Rukko, escape an abusive situation and run to the big city. They are soon befriended by two boys who offer them shelter and lessons on how to survive on their own. This book shows the power of the human spirit when faced with unbelievably difficult circumstances. Note: Read the book first before sharing it with students, as the author covers difficult subjects.

[https://www.amazon.com/Bridge-Home-Padma-Venkatraman/dp/1524738115/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=bridge+from+home&qid=1579726623&s=books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Bridge-Home-Padma-Venkatraman/dp/1524738115/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=bridge+from+home&qid=1579726623&s=books&sr=1-1)

### A Perfect Day by Lane Smith — Primary Picture Book

It is a perfect day for Cat, Dog, Bird and Squirrel. It all changes when Bear enters the backyard. This picture book is an introduction to point of view, as it helps students see that "perfect" does not look the same for everyone. What can you do when someone else's idea of perfect contradicts your idea of perfect? What does a perfect day look like to you?

[https://www.amazon.com/Perfect-Day-Lane-Smith/dp/1626725365/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?keywords=a+perfect+day&qid=1579727071&s=books&sr=1-3](https://www.amazon.com/Perfect-Day-Lane-Smith/dp/1626725365/ref=sr_1_3?keywords=a+perfect+day&qid=1579727071&s=books&sr=1-3)



## Writing in Response to Math

Today's students are not asked to simply solve math equations correctly. Rather, a good math student must correctly solve a math problem and then present their thinking and solution using good writing techniques. This genre of writing requires a specific skill set. *Write Now—Right Now* is excited to announce a new program: *Writing in Response to Math*. This easy to follow program provides the teacher with step-by-step lesson plans to use with their students as they teach children how to sequentially explain their math thinking. Each program includes samples of grade-appropriate math problems addressing the different strands. By following these simple steps, students are able to clearly explain each step they took while solving a math word problem. Now available for 3rd, 4th and 5th grades.

**We love to talk writing! If we can ever be of service or you'd like to chat, please email us at [darlene-and-terry@writenow-rightnow.com](mailto:darlene-and-terry@writenow-rightnow.com)**

**Additional ideas and activities can be found in the *Write Now - Right Now Writing Program*.**

**To view grade level samples, locate additional newsletters and read blog posts, visit:**

**[writenow-rightnow.com](http://writenow-rightnow.com)**

**The Write Now—Right Now Writing Program is now being used in 50 states and four Canadian provinces. How can we be of help to you in your classroom?**