

# Writing Mat 3a: Narrative Writing: Main Character Solves a Problem

Mat 3a builds on skills from Mats 1 and 2. With Mat 3a, use a specific structure to write sentences about a main character solving a problem. The directions and mat are identified by the star symbol, meaning it is for young writers with intermediate ability.

**Students: Plan your idea by writing sentences about a main character (Somebody) who has a problem (Wanted, But) and tries to solve it (Then, Now).**

**Then put the sentences together to form your story.**

  
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Use QR code to access  
a video of how to use  
the mat!



TENNESSEE  
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RESEARCH  
CENTER

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**TRACING LETTERS:**

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z  
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

**TIME TO PLAN:**

Somebody

↓  
Wanted

↓  
But

↓  
So

↓  
Then

**SOME WORDS TO USE:**


**LET'S WRITE:**

Handwriting practice lines consisting of a solid blue top line, a dashed red middle line, and a solid blue bottom line. There are 10 sets of these lines for writing.

**CHECK YOUR GRIP:**

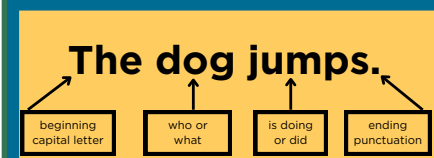


**CHECK YOUR WORK:**

*Do your sentences?*

- begin** with a capital letter?
- include a **who** or **what** the sentence is about?
- include **what** your who/what **is doing**?
- end** with punctuation (. ? !)?

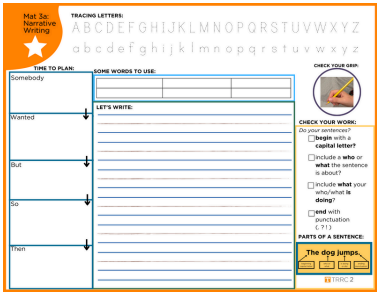
**PARTS OF A SENTENCE:**



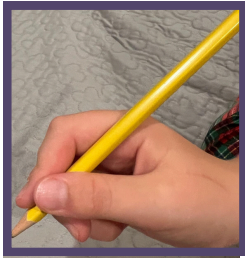


# Writing Mat 3a Guide: Narrative Writing: Main Character Solves a Problem

**Print out the page to write on it with a pencil. You also can place the printed page in a plastic sheet protector to use with a dry- or wet-erase marker with a thin point.**



### CHECK YOUR GRIP:



**Parents/Caregivers/Teachers:** The tri-pod pencil grip is the recommended way to hold a writing utensil (pencil, pen, marker, etc.). One tip for practicing the grip is to first lay the pencil/writing utensil on a flat surface with the tip pointing towards the writing hand. Have your child/student pinch the utensil with their thumb and index finger (first finger next to the thumb) close to the tip of the utensil. Then, while still holding the tip, have your child/student use their other hand to flip the end of the utensil over so that it is resting between the thumb and index finger of the hand holding the utensil. Now, slide the second finger of that hand over to support the other side of the pencil. Check to make sure your child/student is not holding on too tightly. You will see a visual of the grip to use as a model on the mat.

**Students:** Take a look at the picture of someone holding a pencil. Try to use this grip when holding your pencil or anything you use to write. You will see that your first finger and your thumb do most of the work, while your second finger helps to keep the pencil in place. Be careful not to squeeze too tightly. Check your grip whenever you are writing.

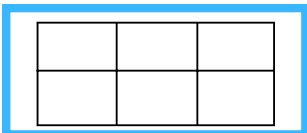
### TRACING LETTERS:



**Parents/Caregivers/Teachers:** The mat includes a model of the alphabet in lowercase and uppercase printed letters. The letters are printed with dashed lines so they can be used for tracing practice. For example, your child/student could trace each letter and then say the name of the letter, or they can trace the letters in their name. The alphabet also can be used while writing to help remember how to form each letter.

**Students:** At the top of your mat, you have the alphabet written in uppercase (capital) and lowercase print. The letters are dashed so that you can practice tracing the letters. Also, use the letters to help you spell words while you write.

### SOME WORDS TO USE:



**Parents/Caregivers/Teachers:** Another part of the mat is a place to write words your child/student may want to use in their story. You can write words that you believe would be difficult for them to write independently. You also could ask them if there are any words that they would like to include in their writing. For example, if their story is about a trip to the park with their dog, Tahlula, you would write the dog's name in a box. You also may want to write the words walk and park. Of course, you want to encourage them to sound out the words and spell the words as best they can, using what they know about letters and sounds. Therefore, don't write all the words your child/student will need. Limit this to words that they would not be able to sound out on their own.

**Students:** Now that you have your idea and a plan for what you will write, think about some words that might help you write your story. You can write these in the Words to Use box, or your parent/caregiver/teacher can write the words for you. Don't forget that your spelling does not need to be perfect. Use what you know about letters and sounds to spell the words.

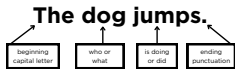
### TIME TO PLAN:

Somebody	↓
Wanted	↓
But	↓
So	↓
Then	↓

**Parents/Caregivers/Teachers:** On the left side of the mat, you will see a space for your child/student to plan their story. Planning is an important part of the writing process because it helps your child/student think about what they want to write and how they will put their ideas onto the paper. Help your child/student organize what they would like to write by thinking of somebody to be the main character. This does not have to be a person. Then, think about what the somebody wanted to have or do, what prevented this from happening, and how the problem was finally solved. Your child/student can jot some notes in each box. Be sure to have your child/student tell you about their ideas before or after they write their notes in the boxes.

**Students:** On the left side of your mat, you have a space to plan what you want to write. Take a few minutes to think about your story idea. Then, write some notes in the boxes about somebody who will be your main character. This does not have to be a person. Also write notes about what the somebody wanted to have or do, what happened, and how they solved the problem. Don't forget to share your idea with someone or say it aloud to yourself.

### PARTS OF A SENTENCE:



**Parents/Caregivers/Teachers:** You will see an example sentence in the bottom right-hand corner of the mat. Take a few minutes to read the example sentence and talk about the important parts of a complete sentence. Starting at the beginning of the sentence and moving left to right, point out the parts of the sentence. First, the sentence begins with a capital letter. Next the sentence must include a subject, or the who or what the sentence is about. The sentence also must include a predicate. A predicate is a verb or the action happening in the sentence. It tells what the subject of the sentence is doing/has done/will do. Finally, the sentence ends with some kind of punctuation. Depending on the sentence, this could be a period, question mark, or exclamation mark. Ask your child/student to think about these parts while they are writing.

**Students:** Before you start writing, take a look at the sentence in the bottom corner of the mat. You will see that the sentence begins with a capital letter [The]. Your sentence must include a subject. This is the who or what your sentence is about [dog]. You also will need a predicate (verb) that tells what the subject is doing/has done/will do [jumps]. Finally, you will need to end your sentence with some kind of punctuation. It will change depending on your sentence. If you are telling something, use a period [ . ]. If you are asking something, use a question mark [ ? ], and if you are excited or want to emphasize something, use an exclamation mark [ ! ].

### LET'S WRITE:


**Parents/Caregivers/Teachers:** Your child/student will complete the writing portion of the mat. Using the drawing/notes and the words recorded on the mat, have your child/student write at least one sentence for each part of the narrative: Somebody, Wanted, But, So, Then. Encourage your child/student to write at least three sentences. If the mat is printed, have your child/student use a pencil. If the mat is in a plastic sheet protector, have your child/student use a dry- or wet-erase marker with a thin point.

**Students:** Now it's time to write! Use the lines on the mat to write about your idea. Look at your drawings or notes and the words on the mat. Then, include sentences for the parts of your story: Somebody, Wanted, But, So, Then. You should have at least three sentences. Use a pencil if the mat is printed. Use a thin point dry- or wet-erase marker if the mat is in a sheet protector. Have fun!

### CHECK YOUR WORK:

Does your sentence?

- begin with a capital letter?
- include a **who** or **what** the sentence is about?
- include **what** your **who/what is doing**?
- end with punctuation (. ? !)?

**Parents/Caregivers/Teachers:** After your child/student is finished writing their story, have them read it aloud. Ask them to check if each sentence makes sense and communicates what they want it to say. Your child/student may need to add, take away, or change the words at this time. Then, help your child/student use the sentence writing checklist to make sure that they have included all the important parts of a sentence. If they are missing any of the parts, prompt your child/student to go back and revise their sentence to include what is missing. Remember to have them use the model sentence to help them check.

**Students:** After you finish writing your story, read it aloud and check if it makes sense. You can always add or take away parts until your sentences say what you wanted them to say, and the story makes sense. The last step is to use the checklist to make sure you have included all the important parts of a sentence. If not, go back and add them. You can use the model sentence to help you check.