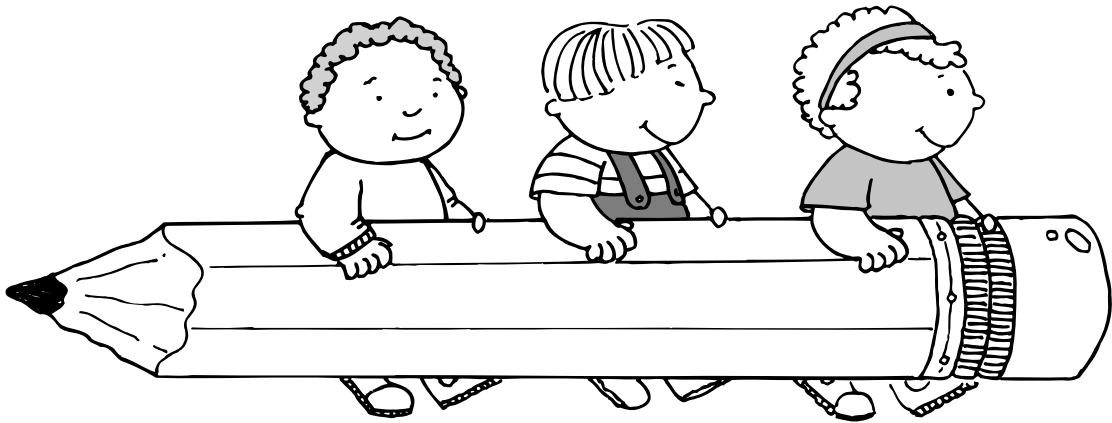


Four Square (4□) Writing Method for Grades 1-3



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Illustrated by Mary Galan Rojas



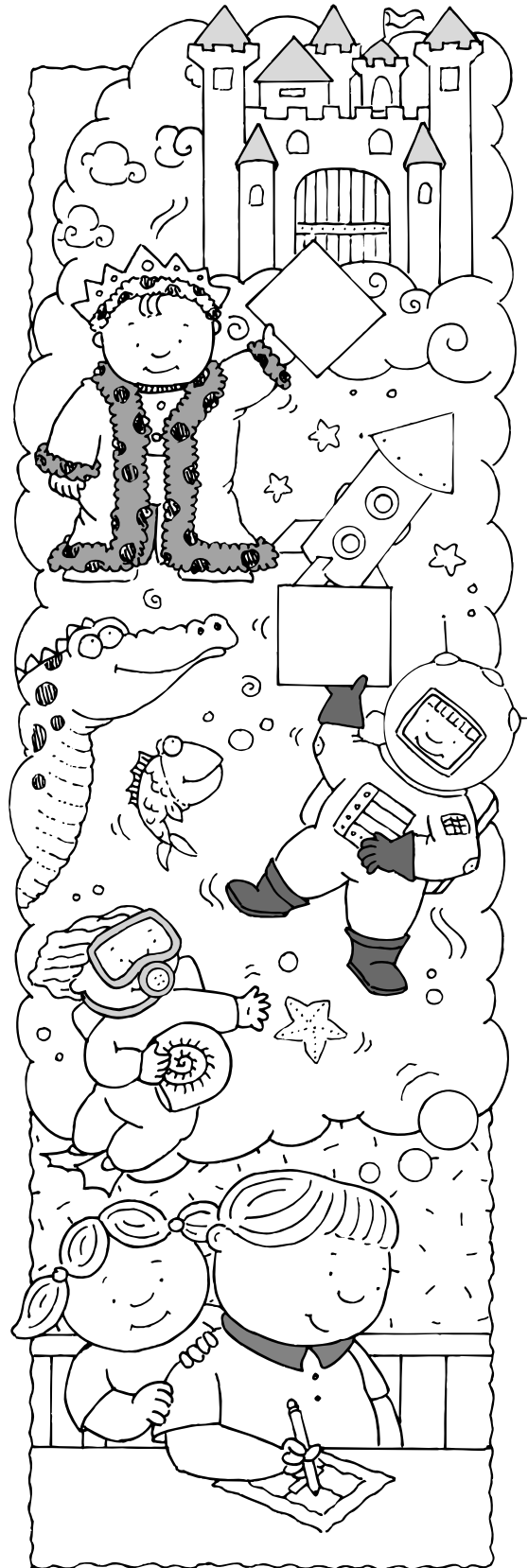
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Dear Teacher or Parent,

In collegiate studies of elementary education, future teachers learn about the importance of writing as a language art. Elementary education students are told that it is a vital form of expression and a communication skill which is required for the work force of the future. Writing is touted as being an interdisciplinary link for classroom teachers to apply almost universally. Today's teachers are aware of the authentic assessments that students will face and that the basic language arts skills are vital to their success.

Even while writing has taken a stronger role in the schools, a gap has developed at the primary and secondary levels. High school teachers are quick to point out that students arrive without the skills to take an essay test or to write a term paper. Yet elementary education teachers have been reluctant to abandon current practices.

While this disparity has existed for a long time, it did not escalate to a crisis proportion until states began assessing the writing of their elementary age students. The disturbing results of the initial tests have proven that our children lack fundamental writing skills. Many cannot produce a focused, well-supported and organized composition.

Why don't we teach writing? When we teach children to read, we give them decoding skills to use. When we teach them science, we give them the scientific method. When we teach mathematics, we give them skills and drill specific facts and yet, we provide little skill instruction for writing but expect results.

In the following chapters we present a method of teaching basic writing skills that is applicable across grade levels and curriculum areas. It can be applied for the narrative, descriptive, expository and persuasive forms of writing. Prewriting and organizational skills will be taught through the use of a graphic organizer. This visual and kinesthetic aid is employed to focus writing, to provide detail and to enhance word choice. It is an excellent aid in preparing students for the demand/prompt draft writing assessments being given throughout the country.

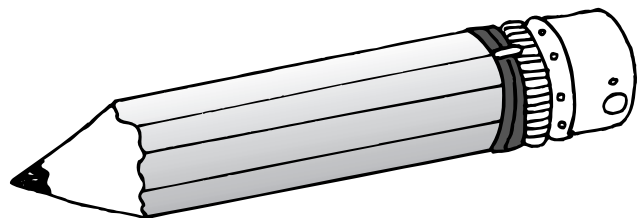
Teaching writing through the use of a graphic organizer empowers students to write with confidence. Gloria Houston in her article "Learning How Writing Works" in the September 1997 issue of *Writing Teacher* states: "Visual organizers help students to conceptualize, understand, and structure a piece of written discourse successfully. Organizers eliminate 'jellyfish writing' and provide coherence and cohesiveness in a piece of writing."

We hope you can use the four square to help teach students writing, thought processes and study practices.

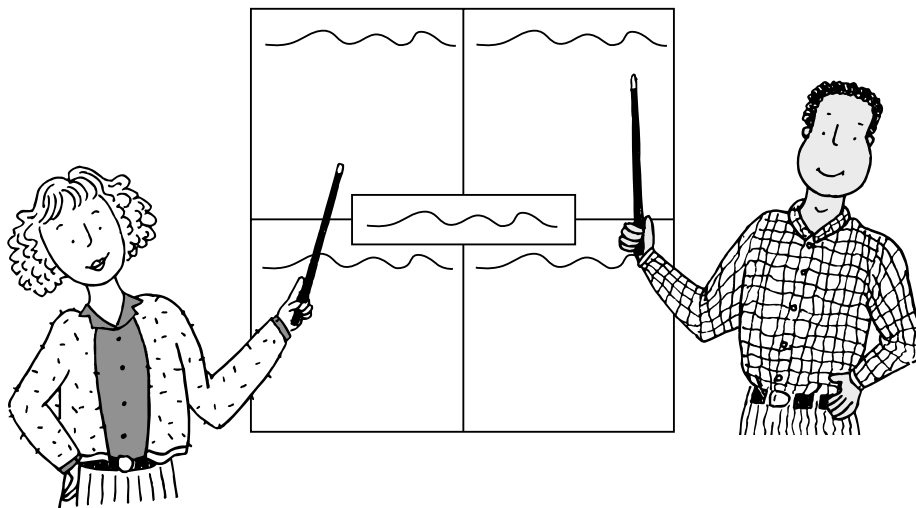
Sincerely,

Judith & Evan

Judith S. and Evan Jay Gould



How to Use This Book



Four square instruction should be done at least biweekly-weekly in the primary grade classroom. It should be accompanied by other writing practice (e.g. shared writing, journals, letter writing, etc.).

Section 1

Getting Organized

This section focuses on the sequential instruction of the four square. It begins with activities that are appropriate for use with the youngest students. Steps one through five can be completed easily with students in the first grade. Steps six through 10 are designed for the second grade. Certainly, there will be the exceptional student, so feel free to take each child as far as he or she can go.

Section 2

Other Forms of Composition

Because our instruction is based on the expository style, we must make students aware of the other forms of writing and show them how to apply their skills. This section provides four square teaching tips and examples for the narrative, descriptive and persuasive styles.

Section 3

Samples of Four Square and Essays

This section provides completed organizers and corresponding essays for the four writing styles. These may be used as models for students or for your reference in instruction.

Section 4

Four Square and Beyond

Once the four square is learned, it is a handy tool for organizing thoughts across the curriculum. This section provides suggestions for use in the language arts program, the sciences, the arts and even mathematics. If the student is successful in four square writing, why not extend that success?

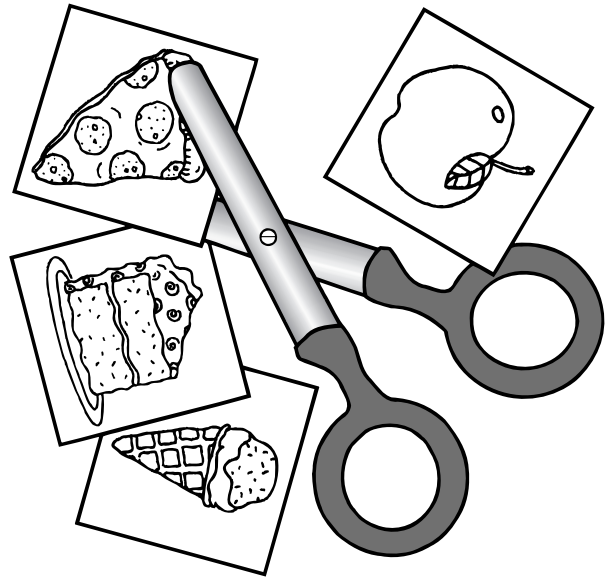
Section 5

Practice Prompts

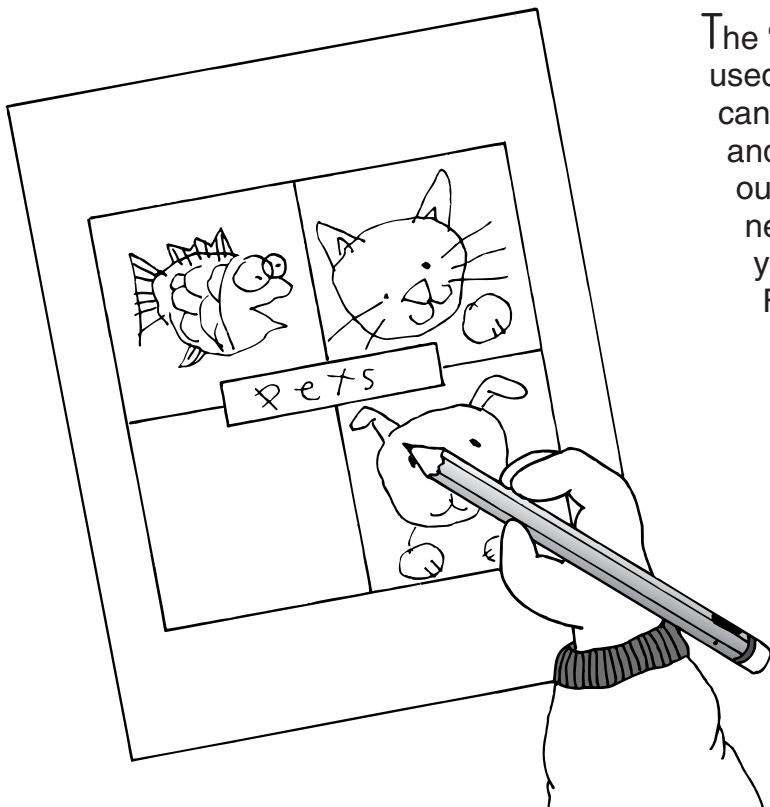
This section contains reproducible practice pages that are appropriate for use once students have learned the organizer. There are examples in the expository and narrative styles.

We can introduce the four square early in the instruction of writing and prewriting to prepare students for its later use. Also, the four square will become a familiar and friendly format for organization and classification.

Once students have achieved mastery in the picture card exercise, they are ready for the more abstract cut-and-paste activity on the following pages. There is an additional level of abstraction involved, so it is important to allow students to develop the skills with the manipulative materials.



After practice with cut-and-paste activities, the students can be moved to a “blank four square” worksheet or journal page. The topic is written in the middle and the students must draw the items in the outer boxes. Encourage labeling of their pictures, and allow any spellings that they come up with at this point. It is recommended that the conventional spelling be penciled in because students often do not remember what they themselves have drawn or written.

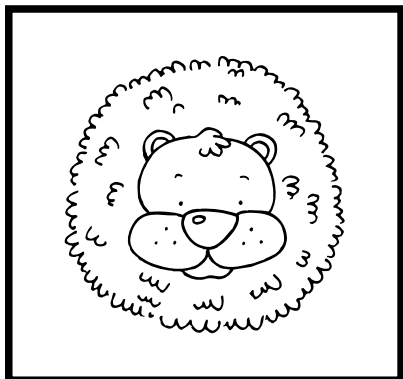
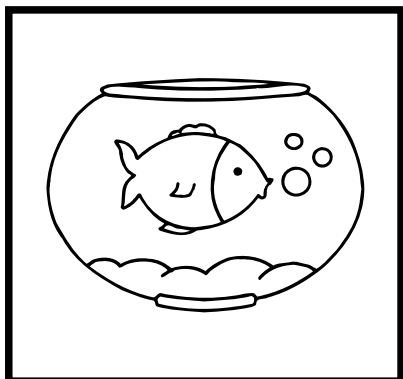
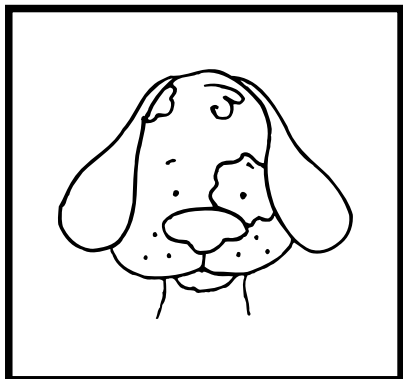
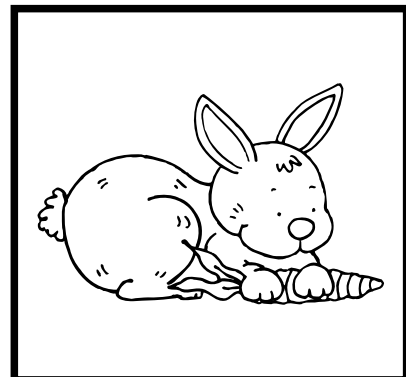
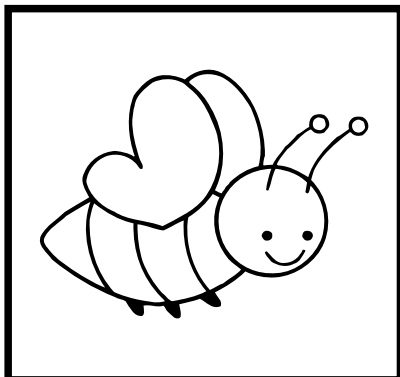
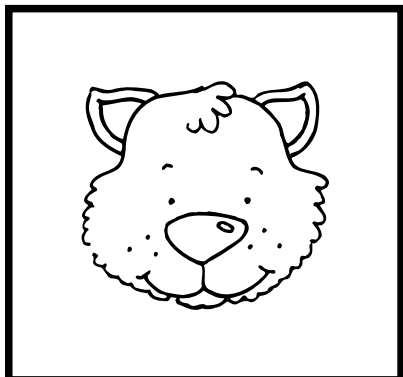


The “blank four square” can be successfully used as a daily journal page. The students can copy the word that goes in the center and complete the categorization in the outer boxes. Topics for this activity are nearly limitless. Pages can be done as you study shapes, numbers and colors. Four squares can be completed on a letter being studied by simply drawing four items that begin with the letter sound. Common items can be classified by writing toys, foods, animals, sports or other popular topics in the center.

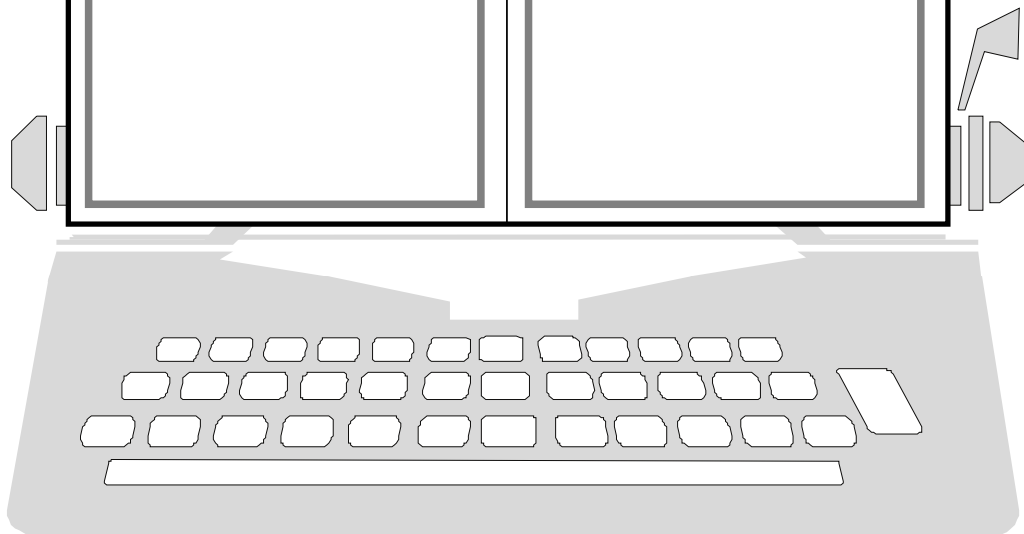
These activities are fun and non-threatening and should be within the ability of children with the least amount of early childhood literacy training.

Name _____

Directions: Cut out pictures that belong in the four square and paste in the four boxes.



Pets	



Name _____

Directions: Cut out pictures that belong in the four square and paste in the four boxes.

