Grammar & Composition Notebook

Purposes for a notebook
There are several purposes for making a student Grammar and Composition Notebook.

First, the notebook will be a reference manual of sorts, that will be added to in subsequent years.

Secondly, it will provide one place for all writing assignments. Many of these assignments are built upon week by week, and it can be easy to lose track of them.

Finally, the ability to see the improvement in skills is a great boost for kids!

Supplies needed
We suggest the following supplies for each student's notebook (Levels 2-12):

- A binder. If you want to keep your kids' work from year to year, get a 2" binder. However, if you want to just have a place for one school year's worth of work at a time, a 1" binder will suffice. *Note that Level 1 students will not be creating a Grammar and Composition Notebook. If you decide to keep his writing assignments separate from his other subjects, a pocket folder or ½” binder will be adequate. Unless of course, he loves to draw and caption…then you might need a 1” binder.
- Dividers with tabs. Years ago, I bought plastic dividers that won't rip or tear from lots of handling. We use the same ones from year to year, thus eliminating the need to repurchase them.
- Notebook paper, and plenty of it.
- Optional: Colored paper, which will be used in the reference section to make finding various pages easier. You'll need about 15-25 pieces of paper of varying colors for each student.

Setting up the notebook
Students in all levels (except Level 1) are instructed to begin setting up their Grammar and Composition Notebook in Week 1, but you can get a running jump on the school year by having them set it up during the summer if you like. The amount of work done each week, and/or filed in this notebook, is determined by the learning level. Students of all learning levels, except Level 1, should have the same labels on their tab dividers:

- Reference
- Goals
- Work in Progress
- Completed Work

The “Reference” section of the student notebook will be added to throughout each year. If your student has made a Grammar and Composition Notebook before, he can keep his previous work, and simply add more information to this section as he grows older. As fine motor skills are refined or typing is learned, your student want to re-do work from his younger years.

The first pages to be added to the “Reference” section are the parts of speech. Each student will need eight pieces of paper, all of the same color, which amounts to one page for each part of speech. (See Writing Aids “Eight Parts of Speech” for further information.)

- Level 2 learners are not asked to define each part of speech. Rather, the tops of each of the pages of this section are simply to be titled by the particular part of speech and each week, the student can write words, make illustrations, or cut out pictures that display that part of speech.
- If illustrations are used, require students to write neat labels for them.
- Optional: If you desire to teach more details about nouns and verbs, the student can draw lines to divide his paper into sections, as shown here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nouns</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>common</td>
<td>action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proper</td>
<td>being</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although the speed at which other levels write the parts of speech varies, we suggest that Levels 3 and upward write out their definitions. Allow the student to refer to his grammar book for the proper definition. Remember to instruct students to put each part of speech on its own piece of paper, and we recommend that the pages should all be the same color.

As other subsections are added to the “Reference” section of the Grammar and Composition Notebook, the student may use varying colors of pages. A strip can also be cut off the side of the page furthest from the holes to create extra tabbed pages. Each of these sample sections below will not be used in all learning levels, so have the child add the correct pages to his notebook as he comes across them in assignments.

Other notes on using the notebook

In Levels 1-9, students are directed as to when to add a page to their notebooks. However, Levels 10-12 are not always provided with this instruction. It is assumed that these older students are becoming more self-directed and responsible.

Periodically, students are asked to write down goals and file these in the proper section of their Grammar and Composition Notebooks. Identifying specific areas where improvement can be made is important for obtaining accomplishments. We believe that by actively involving the student in goal-setting, his writing exercises become more meaningful to him than what they may seem to students who don't understand their purpose and so just consider them meaningless activities in the form of seat work. Make sure students include the date when heading each paper, and when setting specific goals, so that he can reference his improvement from unit to unit, or year to year. These registries of goals can also be used to make checklists for the student in self-correction, so he can be sure to consistently incorporate new skills into his writing.

The “Work in Progress” section of the notebook will house the student's writing projects that are not yet fully completed. Often, this is work that is part of a multi-week assignment. However, even on a one-week assignment, if a student works on a composition one day and needs to continue it the next day, teach him to file his unfinished work here overnight. This way, no time will be lost in hunting for the half-finished paper on the morrow. Organizational skills such as this are excellent training ground for future college or vocational work.

As assignments are concluded, they will be moved to “Completed Work.” We suggest that all finished work should include the student's name and date. Keeping completed work in the same notebook from year to year is an excellent way to spur the student to writing better compositions, as long as the notebook does not become too big to handle easily. Seeing the improvement that has been accomplished is a great motivator to diligence!