

# Chapter 2: How to Use CQLA

## Spelling Skills

All spelling skills appropriate for each level are covered every two years (though some are repeated more often based on the passages, etc.).

The following are benefits of spelling the CQLA way:

1. The student is learning words with commonalities based on spelling. (Spelling programs often teach spelling words with commonalities based on vocabulary—a method that is effective for vocabulary study but ineffective for spelling study.)
2. The student is writing words in his *Spelling Notebook*—an exercise in “grouping” the words with like spelling characteristics, which helps cement spelling learning.
3. The student is continuously working on his own misspelled words.
4. The student does not have to constantly repeat words that he has already mastered.
5. It is effective!

## Purposes for Grammar Cards in CQLA

1. Practice note-taking skills
2. Reinforce the usage skill by writing it
3. Have them available to study the skills throughout their school years

## Using CQLA in the Homeschool Family

There are many ways you may set up your teaching of CQLA. You may choose to use one of the plans outlined here or devise a method that works for your family. Work within your family’s circumstances, and enjoy teaching your children!

One method for teaching CQLA is to meet daily with your students in each level of CQLA for a certain amount of time, covering as much as you can during that time and giving your students CQLA “assignments” to be done on their own while you help another student. (The five day and four day Teacher’s Helps at the back of each weekly lesson will aid in planning how much to “cover” each day.) The benefit of this approach is that you are communicating with your students daily, checking their assignments as completed, and giving them feedback continuously. The drawback to this approach is that your students may not be able to work independently on language arts if, for some reason, you are unable to meet with them on a certain day. If having language arts sessions with all of your students everyday is feasible for you, this approach is beneficial; however, it is not required for the success of CQLA.

Another method for teaching CQLA, one that the author has used with positive results during the seven years of testing CQLA with twenty-plus students each week, is to structure your language arts meetings much like tutoring sessions. For example, you might have two 45-minute meetings each week with your older students and three 30-minute meetings each week with your younger students (per CQLA level). In this approach, you “teach” all of the skills out of the CQLA weekly lesson that the student will need to learn in order to do assignments until you meet with him again. This approach is especially good for intermediate and secondary students as it causes them to work independently. It is a helpful approach for a busy homeschooling mom since it allows her to spend more quality time when she does meet with her students, and she can stagger her language arts “classes.” You might try a combination of daily meetings with your younger students and “tutoring blocks” with your older students to see which method works for you.

Finally, Level B or Level C students may work independently on CQLA, reading the material, completing the assignments, checking the answers to their assignments with the Answer Key, writing essays and reports, studying spelling words, and so forth (after the initial three-month learning curve time is over). Assignments requiring your assistance are marked with a (T) in Levels B and C at the beginning to indicate that you will need to check his report, give him a dictation quiz, or give him a spelling test.

## Copying Lessons in CQLA

Each weekly lesson begins with a passage that relates to the monthly character quality. These passages may be fiction, non-fiction, poetry, plays, Bible passages, hymns, biographies, journal entries, newspaper articles, or anything else that pertains to the corresponding character trait. The first part of the week, preferably the first day, your student will read the **entire** passage and copy the portion for his level in his notebook. Your student should check his copy, paying special attention to whether he has spelled everything correctly, punctuated properly, indented accurately, lined up appropriately (if it is poetry), etc. Discussion as to why that type of passage is written that way (poetry lines all beginning to the left, dialogue starting a new paragraph with each new speaker, etc.) is included in the lessons, so do not be concerned if you are not sure which things to point out in your student’s copying.

Do not underestimate this portion of CQLA: copying good writing is a powerful learning tool that helps students become proficient writers. It might seem like a simple task that only takes a small amount of time, but remember, in addition to just copying the passage, your student will be using that passage to learn many language arts skills throughout the week, so it is important that he familiarizes himself with it from the first day of the week.

## Dictation Quiz in CQLA

At the end of each week, your student will take dictation on that week's passage. Students should take dictation on only the portion of the passage they copied on the first day of the lesson (though students should read the entire passage each day). This may at first seem like a difficult task, but as your student grows accustomed to the dictation quizzes, he will progressively gain confidence. Remember that he will have studied the details of the passage (why there is a comma before the coordinating conjunction, why the quotation begins with a capital letter, etc.) throughout the week as he completes his assignments. Your student will gain an understanding of how the passage is written before he takes dictation on it.

During dictation, read the whole passage he will be taking dictation over to your student to remind him of its content before he begins. Then read the first sentence to him, pausing for the commas and dashes and stopping for other punctuation. (For the first few years, you may want to say "pause" when there is a comma and "stop" when there is a period, emphasizing the purposes of these punctuation notes.) Re-read it a few words at a time (or more, if he is older and can handle more at once).

Note: Some families find it laborious to take dictation over three or more lengthy paragraphs. It is acceptable and still beneficial to take dictation over less of the passage than the student copied. The author rarely gives the dictation quiz over the Further Extension paragraph(s).

## Spelling Lessons in CQLA

In order to learn spelling with CQLA, your student will also need the *Spelling Notebook*. (The spelling portion of CQLA was devised by combining Ruth Beechick's spelling strategies, *Play 'N Talk phonics* program's word-family approach, and Gayle Graham's *Tricks of the Trade* book.)

With CQLA's approach to spelling, your student will find the words in the passage that are described in the spelling section, highlight them, copy his spelling words, write sentences with them (optional), and copy them in his *Spelling Notebook*. He will also study the week's list and any other words he missed during the previous week, take a test on these words, and record misspelled words in the Review Words section of next week's spelling lesson. (This process is carefully described in each CQLA lesson.)

You may desire for your student to have further spelling practice than the required spelling in CQLA. For that reason, there are two optional spelling assignments provided each week in Levels B and C: (1) Optional Words: In this section, the monthly Vocabulary Words are listed. Your students may learn these words in addition to his weekly, phonetic-based words. (2) Recording Review Words in the student's *Spelling Notebook*. Each week in Levels B and C, an optional assignment is given in which students record their Review Words in their *Spelling Notebooks* on the corresponding pages. This gives additional spelling practice as the student determines on which page to record his misspelled words and groups them under the heading given in the *Spelling Notebook*. Your student may record misspelled words on whichever page contains the sounds/rules for the portion of the word he misspelled. For example, he may record *irritation* on the *tion* page if he misspelled it with *sion*.

CQLA also has sidebars labeled Optional Spelling Practice. These sidebars contain additional practice of each week's spelling words via activities such as unscramble the spelling words, add suffixes, choose the correct spelling, and more. You may decide to use these additional spelling activities or to not use them, depending on your student's need.

### Normal "20-Word Spelling List"?

CQLA does not have the normal "twenty words to learn for Friday" as many spelling programs do. The reason for this sometimes-shorter list of spelling words is that your student will also be learning the words he misspelled in the dictation quiz and the words he misspelled in his writing assignment for that week, as well as any he did not pass from the previous weeks' spelling tests. When these words are combined, he will be learning twelve to thirty words each week.

You will want your student to get in the habit early of recording his misspelled words from this week's rough draft writing assignment, dictation quiz, and spelling test, on next week's spelling Review Words lines.

### Marking Revisions in Student's Writing

For quick checking by the teacher, it is suggested that CQLA students highlight the changes they have made in their writings. Your student may develop a system for ease of checking—perhaps highlighting all verb changes with pink, adjectives with yellow, etc. You may want your student to highlight the revision in a certain color and then make the checkmark on the Checklist Challenge check box with the same color.

For example, he would highlight all of his newly added verbs with a green highlighter, and make the checkmark in the CC with a green highlighter, as well. When you look at his CC and see a green checkmark, you will know to look in his essay for the green highlights to find his changed verbs. (If he uses the same colors consistently for his revisions, checking his Checklist Challenge revisions will become a simple process for the teacher.) See Chapter 18 for a Checklist Challenge coding method you may desire to implement for all of your CQLA students.

### Editing Students' Writing

1. Have your student review his writing one paragraph at a time looking for errors.
2. Highlight errors for him and have him tell you how he needs to correct them.
3. Make a tic mark in the margin for each error in each line of his writing; have him find the errors in that line himself.
4. Make a list at the bottom of his paper of various types of error and put the number of tic marks before each "type" that he needs to find.
5. Verbally go through each sentence, telling him what kind of errors to look for and wait for him to find it; eventually you may need to help him find the error.
6. Read each sentence together and tell each other any errors you find.

### Copy Box Paragraphs

The paragraphs in the copy boxes for each weekly passage should be copied, studied, dictated, and rewritten for reports as separate paragraphs unless otherwise noted. Sometimes the paragraphs are divided among the copy boxes to create three levels for copying and dictation. This will be indicated by a sentence directly beneath the copy boxes that states "All three of the copy boxes should be considered one paragraph throughout this weekly lesson." When you see a notice like this, your student should consider the individual copy boxes to be one complete paragraph for copying, rewriting the passage, dictation, and skill study.

### Spelling Words From the Dictation Lessons

In addition to spelling words in the spelling section of each CQLA lesson, your student will also have the opportunity to record words for further study that he misspells during dictation. At the end of the dictation quiz, your student will be told to record any misspelled words his teacher chooses in the Review Words section of next week's Spelling Lesson. Choose words for review that your student should know how to spell but missed on his dictation quiz.

### Grammar Lessons in CQLA

Within each CQLA weekly lesson are many grammar, punctuation, usage, and writing mechanic lessons. Some are clearly labeled "Grammar" or "Punctuation," while others are incorporated into other parts of the lesson. Students in the primary grades should be taught grammar within the context of learning to write. Only grammar skills necessary for excellent writing should be focused on for the first several years of academic learning.

In the sidebar on page sixteen, you will find a systematic order for teaching the areas of language arts. Decoding of words (reading) is taught first, followed by encoding (spelling), and then grammar and usage for writing. CQLA's advanced grammar (which includes much of the grammar and usage they have already learned through writing) is taught for higher English study.

The theory behind CQLA's method of teaching grammar is that students will learn grammar and usage more easily in its context: reading and copying exercises, creative writing projects, and composition assignments. They will become accomplished writers as they write using the grammar principles they are learning.

The grammar sections in CQLA are taught within the context of the passages and applied in the students' own writings. Grammar in CQLA is taught using a method that helps students grasp grammar concepts, known as Teach-Practice-Apply (TPA). First, they work with the grammar in the passage and learn the concepts in the teaching text. ("Find the prepositional phrase opener in this week's passage" followed by explanations and instructions. This is the **Teach** portion)

Next, they learn grammar through rhymes, mnemonics, songs, oral practice, object lessons, and "check sentences." Then, they work with grammar through sentences dealing with the character quality taught that month. After that, they practice using that grammar skill while writing on their own. (All of those exercises are the **Practice** portion.)

Finally, they use the grammar skill in that week's writing assignment through the Checklist Challenge. Once students have learned grammar within the context of writing, they will become excellent writers through proper application. (This is the **Apply** step.)

### Grammar Cards in CQLA

Beginning in CQLA Level B, you will see small shaded boxes labeled "Grammar Card" with grammar notes written on them. To complete the Optional assignments of making grammar cards, each student from Level B and C will need a bound or loose-leaf set of 5" x 7" index cards to make a set of Grammar Cards. They will write the information from the CQLA booklet onto the front of their Grammar Card. They will leave the backs of the cards blank to add more notes later.

These cards can be referred to as you restudy a certain usage topic; re-reading their notes will help to reinforce the skill. ("Look in your Grammar Cards to see how to punctuate a quote.")

Your students will glean much more from their Grammar Cards if they can easily find the notes contained therein. For this reason, it is recommended that you leave the first six to eight cards blank (fronts and backs) and use them as an ongoing Table of Contents. Label the first six to eight cards with a span of letters like a dictionary page (A-C, D-F, G-J, etc.). Record the title of each card on the correct alphabetical page. For example, a Grammar Card that is entitled, "Coordinating Conjunctions," would be recorded near the bottom of the A-C page, with the title and the page number of this Grammar Card. If you have more than one student in one level, they can synchronize their Tables of Contents, so they have the same notes on the same pages of their cards. The Grammar Cards will be simpler to maintain if you use the loose-leaf index cards with punched holes and the small binder that accompanies them. These may be moved around to be placed in alphabetical order as each additional card is created.

Some students truly benefit from writing the notes contained on the Grammar Cards, while others are simply frustrated by it and find it a tedious, laborious task. You may decide to have your student make Grammar Cards each time one is assigned, part of the time, or not at all. All students are told to study the Grammar Cards for each grammar lesson, regardless of whether they make the Grammar Cards or not. If your student does not make Grammar Cards, he can just study the Grammar Cards in his CQLA book as the assignment to study them is given. This studying should be done on the day after the student does the grammar lesson. This will give the student another opportunity to interact with the grammar rules.

### Breakdown of Writing Assignments in CQLA

After skimming through a CQLA unit, you will probably notice its heavy emphasis on composition and creative writing. CQLA incorporates a strong writing curriculum within the monthly CQLA units, using the copying and dictation passages and relating the writing assignments to the correlating character quality.

Nearly every weekly lesson in CQLA contains a writing assignment. The Composition/ Creative Writing assignment beginning in week three scans two weeks of CQLA and is an original writing assignment rather than a rewriting of the weekly passage. (i.e. The student will find his own sources or write from his own experience rather than being given source materials.)

When a writing assignment spans more than one week, it will be broken down into two weeks' lessons. These longer writing assignments will have logical breakdowns, and the skills needed for the assignment may be taught over the course of the writing assignment. CQLA students may be finishing up last week's writing assignment while starting the next; this is fine. If he follows the breakdown of the assignment given in the daily lesson plans (the Teacher's Helps), he will not have trouble completing the writing assignments.

### Study Skills/Prewriting Connection to Writing

Preceding nearly every writing assignment in CQLA are Study Skills/Prewriting assignments that will help prepare the student to write the type of writing assignment given in that week's lesson. This is also purposeful: pre-writing study skills include outlining, note taking, writing paragraph notes for paragraph formation, etc. These are skills that will help students become proficient at organizing their thinking, planning their writing, designing paragraphs, writing Key Word Outlines, and much more. Do not minimize the importance of this part of the weekly lesson.

### Editing Students' Writing for Usage Errors

In each CQLA weekly writing lesson, you will find a Checklist Challenge designed to help your student edit and revise his writing. Editing and revising are often weak areas for young writers. CQLA gives concrete help in the areas of editing and revising. CQLA assists in editing by helping the student correct usage errors, identify misspellings, check punctuation, etc. CQLA also teaches the student how to revise his writing by applying editing strategies; avoiding redundancy; and creating titles, openings, and closings. You will see this more clearly in the section below, entitled "Weekly Checklist Challenge" and in reviewing the Master Checklist Challenge provided in Chapter 16 of this *Teacher's Guide*.

As you assist your student with the editing process, your goal will be to aid him in becoming more independent in editing. The checklists will encourage him to look for errors, but you will be helping him to find those errors and correct them. There are several ways to do this, found in the sidebar entitled, "Editing Student's Writing." There is no hard and fast rule for editing your students' writing; however, try to use the method with the least intervention on your part that still works for him, and gradually wean him from your help.

Sometimes students who are "natural writers" may use sentence structures and writing techniques that are above their mechanical level. For instance, an exceptionally creative student may write excellent fiction, including dialogue, but may not have the mechanical skills to punctuate the dialogue correctly. In that case, you may edit his work for him, explaining what you are doing as

Teacher Tip: If your student asks for spelling help during dictation, consider doing one of the following three things:

1. Remind him that he knows this word and encourage him to try it on his own—especially if it is one of his spelling words or a word he should already know from past lessons.
2. Remind him of the word family or a rhyming word that he already knows. ("Remember, *would* is from the *would, could, should* family.")
3. Write the word on the whiteboard for him if he cannot encode it by any other method. After the dictation quiz, you may consider which of his misspelled dictation words you will have him add to next week's Review Words. (For example, you may decide halfway through dictation that you really should have put that difficult word on the whiteboard from the beginning as it is not a spelling he is familiar with or at his level. In that case, do not put it on his Review Words list for next week.)

**Note:** If your student misspelled a word in his dictation quiz that you think he should already know (either because he has had the word previously or it is at his spelling level), you may choose to add it to next week's Review Words section. Just be sure you do not add so many words from his spelling test, dictation quiz, and composition assignment that he is unable to learn them adequately. Also, if you must remove or omit some, keep words that have spelling commonalities so that your student can study these together (for instance, *infectious* and *contagious*).

## Systematic Order of Language Arts Learning

Following is a systematic order for teaching the language arts:

1. Pre-reading and listening skills (including oral comprehension)
2. Phonics for decoding and learning to read
3. Oral and silent reading to reach reading fluency
4. Creative writing, vocabulary, spelling, study skills, composition, and grammar and usage related to writing (all included in CQLA)
5. Isolated grammar, if needed, to prepare for life calling
6. Advanced writing for adulthood to fulfill life callings (e.g. brief writing, book writing, speech writing, business material writing, recipe writing, poetry writing, letter writing, resume writing, article writing, etc.)

Note: Literature, speech, debate, keyboarding, and other communication/language arts areas may be learned whenever needed or desired.

you edit it and telling him that as he gets older, he will learn to do this editing for himself. The same is sometimes true for a student who has an advanced speaking vocabulary and uses words in his writing that are difficult to spell. Correct the spelling with him, and look up the spelling when necessary. View these advanced abilities as God-given; cultivate them when appropriate. (Do not assign words for next week's Review Words that are clearly above his spelling ability; just tell him how to spell them. You do not want to discourage his use of advanced vocabulary in his writings.)

Do not be concerned with your lack of knowledge of usage and grammar. One of the beauties of CQLA is the teacher-friendly aspect of it: you will be learning skills and improving your communication abilities along with your students. In the meantime, the Usage Section (Grammar Cards), found in Chapter 4 of this *Teacher's Guide*, includes the most important rules in an easy-to-use format.

### Weekly Checklist Challenge

As previously mentioned, following each weekly lesson is a Checklist Challenge (CC) for that week. After your student writes his weekly report, he will be directed to revise using that checklist. Your student will be directed to place a checkmark in each box each time he completes a CC item. The boxes represent the number of times he is to insert that revision into his essay or report. For example, if he is asked to insert an adjective in each paragraph and his writing assignment that week is four paragraphs long, there will be four check boxes for him to check. After a couple of weeks of using the CC, your student will be able to revise his essays efficiently with this method.

The weekly Checklist Challenge contains revision tasks according to the level of CQLA. The revision projects refocus his attention on the grammar concepts he is learning throughout that month. For example, if your student has learned prepositional phrases, sentence openers, semicolons, and dashes throughout a given CQLA unit, the Checklist Challenge for his final report in that unit will include revision projects with all of those grammar concepts.

You may want your student to revise his writing with the Checklist Challenge in a color-coded fashion. For example, you may want him to highlight all verb changes with one color, all adverb changes with another color, and so forth. This will make it easy to evaluate his Checklist Challenge at a glance. It will be even easier for you to evaluate his essay if his checkmarks in the CC are color-coded with the highlighted changes in his essay. (See Chapter 17 for additional Checklist Challenge Coding help.)

### Master Checklist Challenge

In Chapter 16 of this *Teacher's Guide*, you will find the Master Checklist Challenge. This master checklist has every revision item your student will learn in CQLA throughout all of his CQLA studies. When your student has used CQLA for several years, he should be able to use the Master Checklist Challenge to edit any composition. (Obviously, you would not want all of those revisions in one report!) You may also use this Master Checklist Challenge in other writing projects for your student. For instance, when your student is writing an essay for another occasion, you might want to photocopy the Master Checklist Challenge, highlight the revision tasks you would like for him to complete for that report, and have him revise his report with that checklist. (Training for Triumph extends permission for you to copy the Master Checklist Challenge provided in the *Teacher's Guide* for your family's use only.)

### Grading CQLA

CQLA uses a Teach-Practice-Apply method throughout each weekly lesson. Keep in mind that you should not "grade" a student during the learning process. Grading is for final products.

The three "final" grades for each week may come from the spelling test, dictation quiz, Checklist Challenge and report (though you may desire to assign a grade for completion of the vocabulary copy, grammar sentences, etc. to reward thoroughness).

In the final copy of the report, you should evaluate:

1. The application of the Checklist Challenge.
2. The content of the entire report. (Is it a clear, concise essay that meets the intended assignment?)
3. The paragraph formation. (Does each paragraph contain one topic? How are the transitions from one paragraph to the next?)
4. The vocabulary used in the report.
5. The editing changes he inserted.